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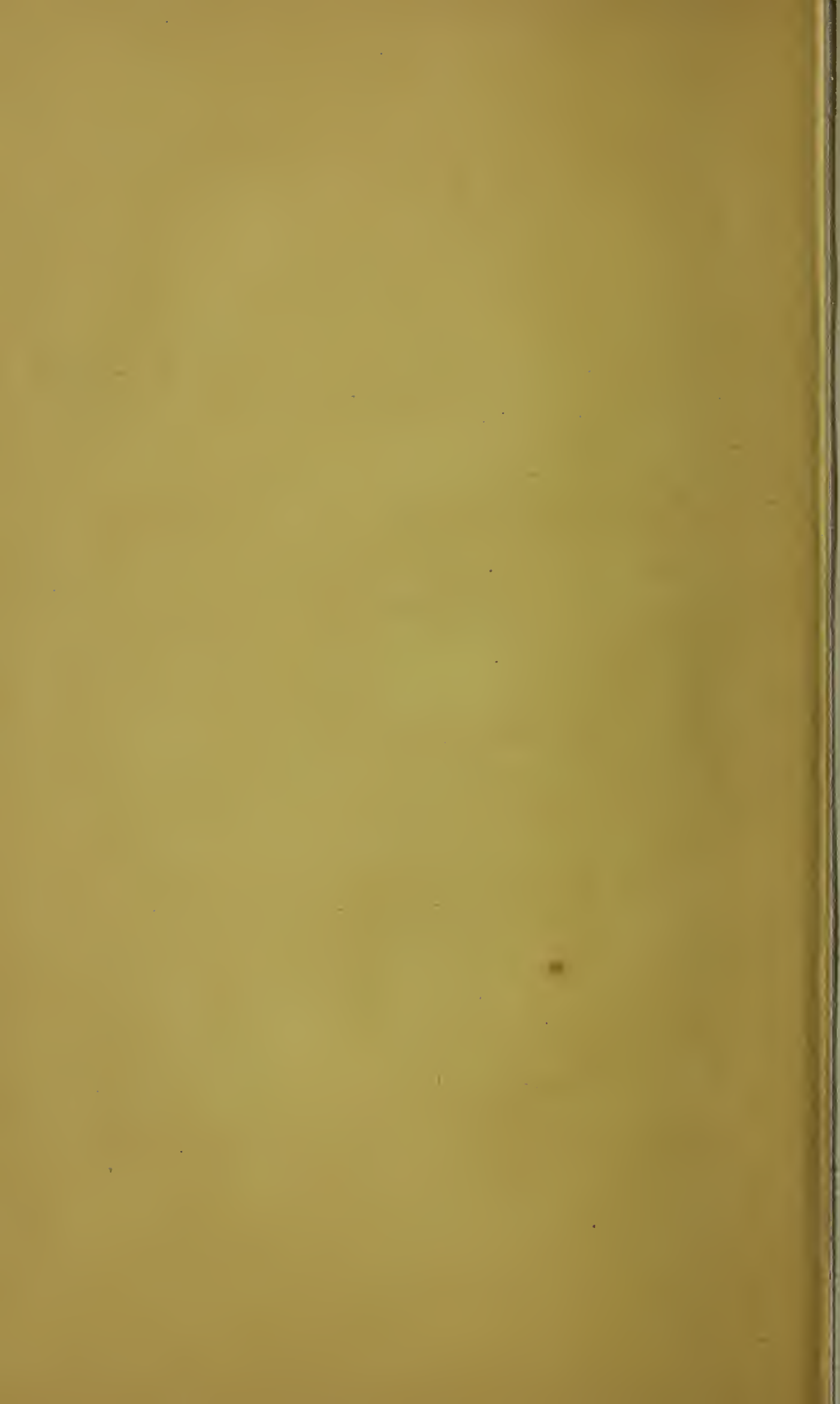
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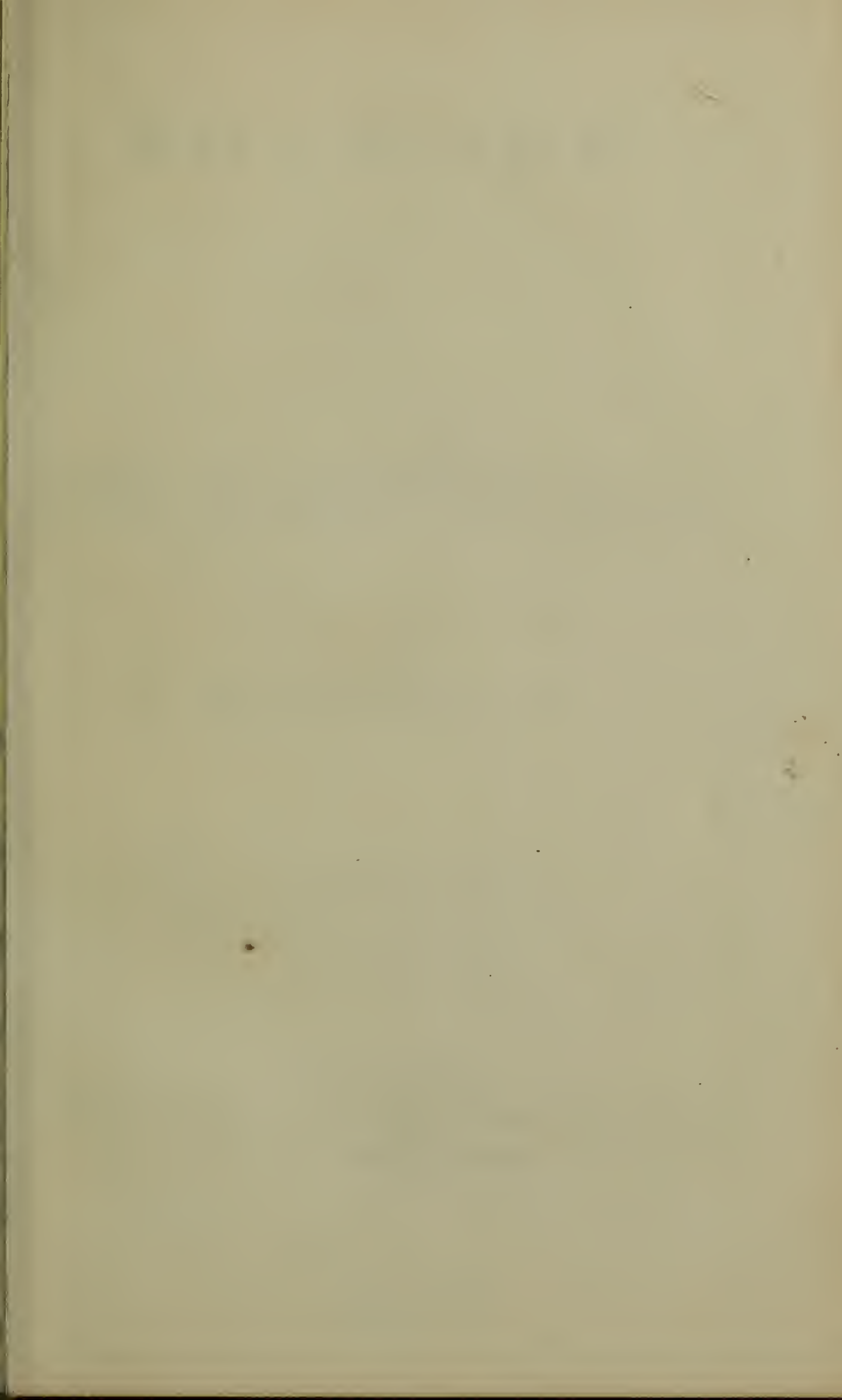
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MAY I BELIEVE?

OR

THE WARRANT OF FAITH.

BY THE
REV. ALFRED HAMILTON, D. D.



PHILADELPHIA:
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PREFACE.

EARLY in my ministerial life I was sent to a vacant church in the Presbytery of Ohio. I was entertained at the house of a good man, a Ruling Elder, but I missed the presence of his wife. During the evening after my arrival, I learned that she was an invalid and confined mainly to her own room; that while she was oppressed by physical disease, she was yet more oppressed by a deep, settled melancholy, arising from the firm belief that for her there was no mercy with God. Her whole countenance was haggard, and the very sight filled one with distress. She had been so for a long time, and I know not that she ever was relieved.

Before leaving the house for the church on Sabbath morning, I was permitted an interview

with her, and spent perhaps a full hour, in endeavouring to awaken hope within her, by dwelling upon the nature of the gospel covenant, the infinite sufficiency of Christ, and the eternal, unchangeable love of God. It was all in vain; her reply was with painful persistency, "It may be for others, not for me."

Later in my ministry, and after I had been called east of the mountains, while assisting Bro. W., then of White Clay Creek, Del., a young lady whose countenance and whole appearance indicated deep distress was pointed out to me, with the request that I would converse with her.

I found her under a conviction of sin so deep and clear as to justify her in the conclusion that mercy was an impossibility in her case. She was certainly a castaway, and was now experiencing a foretaste of the anguish of eternal despair. No presentation of the gospel offer, its freeness, its fulness, its design for the chief of sinners, could gain the least believing attention. For a long time she remained under the cloud. I have not seen her for years, but she found relief; and I was gratified even recently, to learn that she was now a cheerful, earnest Christian. In various other instances I have met with persons who for a short

time have been overwhelmed with this fearful conviction.

While I have learned that, in such cases, nothing but the illumination and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit can give deliverance ; yet I have also learned that the Spirit works through the truth, and that only as we learn and appreciate the truth of God's word, can we arrive at clear, settled, cheerful hopes of mercy through Jesus Christ. Should any one therefore ask why I venture to publish a book of this character, I have but one answer to make.

A desire to aid all persons subjected to such darkness of mind, to find the immediate and perfect relief which the gospel of the grace of God gives, has suggested the work and urged its preparation.

I have been personally greatly benefitted, comforted, sustained, and strengthened by the consideration of the various truths here presented. I have written of things which I do know, by which I have been raised from despair to hope, and in many conflicts, made to triumph, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But are there not works enough on such a subject ? Why multiply books ?

There are many precious works which, if access-

ible, might answer every purpose of this kind ; and yet this particular subject has not been made a specialty, except perhaps in a few cases. Owen on the 130th Psalm contains the most extended consideration of this point, of all the works I now recollect. And this too is a work of great power ; but it is within the reach of few, and its style is by no means attractive to the mass of readers. Besides it seems a law of providence that, in some form, each age must provide its own instruction in every department, scientific or religious. The truth may be the same, must be, but then it must appear in modern forms and in combinations adapted to present, not past, trains and modes of thought. There is but one book of universal adaptation.

The most recent work on this subject, except perhaps some purely controversial issues, is the "Warrant of Faith" by the late Dr. Thomas Scott, author of the Commentary. Even this work is more controversial than strictly practical.

Under these circumstances I have thought there might possibly be room for some such work as this, and though I have not been free from misgivings, yet having the judgment of two friends whose praise is in all the churches, I have concluded to ask for

it a birthright among the offspring of our Board of Publication.

I tremble at the responsibilities of a preacher of the gospel ; those of an author are enhanced by the fact that a book may reach where no living voice can, may be read and exert its influence long after the writer may have gone to his account.

Yet I must confess that a desire to be useful to others, even long after my decease, has exerted its stimulus in the production of these pages. May the good in them be blest ; the evil forgiven and overruled for good. My work in the preparation of these sheets has by no means been continuous. Many and long interruptions have occurred, and this very likely has produced blemishes, which a critic may severely condemn. Such as it is, it has been prepared in the midst of many and widely extended pastoral cares and labours.

If any one shall think it to be a very imperfect work, I have this advantage of him that I have thought so before him. Yet with all its imperfections I venture to send it forth on its errand, asking for it the tender charities of those who would regard it simply as critics ; and from those who are in a condition to need such counsel and instruction

as I have here attempted to give, I ask an earnest, careful, and prayerful perusal.

My great desire is that it may be blessed of God to souls under the various circumstances suggested in its pages, that it may relieve many from a sorrow brooding despair, that it may set many a burdened conscience free, decide many to an immediate choice of the gospel, and a firm, joyful belief in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

If this desire can be granted, I shall feel perfectly satisfied to bear the reproach of all the rhetorical blemishes which may be discovered; all the defects of composition and style which no doubt abound.

The minds of many are now turned to the subject of religion; my hope is that all such may be aided, strengthened, stablished by these pages. To their attention it is humbly but earnestly commended.

My brethren in the ministry may possibly find it adapted to the spiritual condition of some in their flocks; and in this hope I commend it also to their attentive examination and cordial approval.

ALFRED HAMILTON.

COCHRANVILLE, PA. *May*, 1859.

MAY I BELIEVE?

OR THE WARRANT OF FAITH.

THE SINNER SECURE.

THERE are times when men feel no interest in religion, and no anxiety about personal salvation. Then no doubts disturb the peace of the soul, and no fears harass the conscience. The world is full of absorbing interest—business prospers—cares engross—pleasures allure. If there be another world, the best preparation for it is to possess and enjoy the utmost possible of this. God did not make us and place us here with natures so adapted to its objects, pursuits, and pleasures, to punish us, if we committed ourselves to them, and sought their enlarged enjoyment. “Whilst

we live let us live." "Adieu to melancholy." "Drive dull care away."—So men argue; so they try to feel and sing. This is their highest religion; they certainly are safe; they believe they are in no danger: indeed seldom, if ever, think of danger.

Reader, are you in this state of mind? Are you thus secure in your own estimation? Is this world your whole possession? And should you be suddenly called to part with it, have you no lurking doubts about your final safety? Perhaps you had better think.

A CHANGE COMES.

It is not always so with all. Many may be at ease, and resolve every question of their acceptance with God with unhesitating promptness; yet a few have their own difficulties, and are often ready to conclude, that whatever may be the ground of hope or confidence on the part of others, they certainly are not safe—nay, not only not safe, but unworthy to indulge a hope of safety—to think even of the possibility of such a thing. Once they

might have indulged a hope; increasing experience, and knowledge of self, now so operate, as not only to awaken doubt on this subject, but to render hope a baseless presumption. “I am truly a great sinner;” “I am wretched beyond description, and have so treated God, as that, though others may hope, I may not; though there be mercy for others, can there be for me? Others are called upon to live and walk by faith—to find by faith the peace of God which passeth all understanding; but may *I* believe?

So one here and there feels, and reasons with himself, and about his own condition. Occasionally numbers are aroused from their false and dreamy security, and after many struggles, each one is led to ponder this momentous question—May *I* believe? Reader, how is it with you? Have you discovered any thing in yourself, to suggest a doubt as to whether you may enjoy such a privilege?

Truly, sir, I have; and for some time past, I have thought of little else; and have felt that if I might believe, I should be but too

happy. Sir, do you think such a privilege can be mine? May I believe?

DIFFICULTIES—GROUNDS OF DOUBT.

Gladly will I endeavour to answer your question, and remove your distress, but I wish first to know why you desire to believe; and then why you apprehend any difficulty on the subject?

Why sir, I once was gay and thoughtless—a lover of life and pleasure—and neglected wholly the interests of the soul. Religion was to me a gloomy, if not utterly repulsive thing; and though I was carefully raised, and taught to perform many religious duties, and was even fond of some of them, such as public service on the Sabbath; yet I never had a heart to regard and appreciate them as a means of grace—as acts of cheerful obedience to God; hence I was a mere formalist—yet I was not happy. The conviction often flashed upon my mind, that I was not safe; conscience was only partially asleep, and often gave me moments of intense agony.

This embittered my worldly pleasures, and drove me for a time to more frequency and earnestness in religious duties; but still permanent peace did not come; the conviction deepened that I was a guilty sinner, without a Saviour; and now, sir, my whole mind is filled with this one thought, I must have an interest in Jesus Christ as my Saviour, or perish; this I can secure only by faith. I once thought it an easy matter to believe; faith, in my apprehension, was something which I did not, indeed, clearly understand, but which, nevertheless, I supposed could be most readily exercised; and often on this ground deferred the duty, even when urged from the pulpit or the Bible to accept of Christ at once. I now find my error, and am distressed to think that many are similarly involved. I wish to believe, therefore, that I may be saved; and my difficulty is that my sins are of so long standing, so many, and so aggravated—that I have slighted and neglected the calls of God so long, that now he will either not permit me to believe, or will not give me strength to do so.

I have learned in my struggles and distress what I either did not know, or did not appreciate, both that faith is a privilege, and that divine aid is essential to its exercise. And this reminds me of another element in my past folly, as well as of others, who think it easy to believe, and that they can do so in their own strength. I felt not, nor do they now, that it is a gift of God and can be exercised only under the quickening power of his divine Spirit. When refused but once, when rejected for the first time, God would be just to withhold the privilege, to withdraw the offer, and withhold all spiritual aid to accept it; how much more, when slighted, neglected, despised, or misimproved for years!

Alas! sir, how long have I lived a wretch upon God's footstool, despising his mercies, and neglecting, nay, rejecting his unspeakable gift, the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour! Can I be forgiven, for such accumulated sins, such aggravated guilt? May *I* believe? Will God still accord the privilege? Will he

still vouchsafe the strength and power by which I may lay hold of eternal life?

GLIMPSES THROUGH THE GLOOM.

Whatever God may design to do for you or with you, or whatever may be the result of this conference, in reference to your peace and joy in God, this I must be permitted to say: first, that however clearly you may now see your sin and guilt, or however deeply you may feel them a loathsome burden before God, justly exposing you to his displeasure, you do not see nor feel a hundredth part of their real enormity; and it is a far greater wonder that God should permit you to live upon his footstool than you can possibly conceive it to be. His patience, his forbearance are indeed beyond all creature apprehension, and you therefore do well to feel and express the deepest wonder and the most grateful emotions that he should have spared you under such circumstances, and brought you to see yourself as you now do. *He* has surely done it; and hence I say, secondly, that you appear to

be thus far well and truly taught. This is in accordance with the divine plan: "They shall be all taught of God;" and surely they are well taught whom he teaches.

This therefore is encouraging for you. Why has he done so much for you? Has he brought you into the wilderness only to slay you? Has he shown you your sins only to plunge you into deserved despair and death? He might do so. He might reveal your guilt to awaken your self-condemnation, and thus justify in your own conscience his righteous judgment in rejecting you. He has done much for you; but unless he do more, you are wretched and miserable for ever. But the fact that he has done as he has, is an argument which you may use in prayer, and ask him to bless, and crown his *own work*. "Dark waters and thick clouds," seem to surround him, yet here and there the dark masses are not so dense, and thence come glimpses of the star of Bethlehem, inspiring hope that the storm may yet pass away, that the deep fissures and lofty towers of that dark cloud

may yet be spanned with the bow of promise, and the light which radiates from the mercy-seat, may yet fill thy soul with joy and peace in believing. The leaden sky may yet “dapple into day,” and thy light be as the light of the sun rising in his brightness.

THE INDISPENSABLE.

Still, encouragement is not consummation, feeling is not faith, nor is anxiety, nor yet deep distress.

Faith must be exercised or all will be lost. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” This you seem to feel; but do you comprehend the precise nature of that state of mind, that exercise of heart which you call faith or belief? Are you seeking merely *some* relief, or do you feel that “none but *Jesus* can do helpless sinners good;” and is faith the only method of communication with him, the only principle which will identify you with him, and give you an absolute interest in his entire salvation? Feeling this, do you desire to receive and rest upon him, that you may be freed

from the present power and dominion of sin ; from its condemnation before God, and eventually from its very being ? Are you sick of sin ? and tired, disappointed, and despairing under the treatment of all other physicians ; do you seek to commit yourself without condition to his infallibly successful practice ? Do you understand his salvation to be a sovereign remedy for sin in all its forms ? Is sin, your sin, your fountain of sorrow, your source of anxiety and fear ? Do you understand that Christ in his person gave himself as a vicarious sacrifice for sin ;—that his sufferings were, and are accepted of God as a perfect satisfaction to his law and justice ;—that now he is “exalted a Prince and a Saviour” to give repentance and forgiveness of sin, being “able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him ;” —that now, moreover, the entire work of salvation from the first saving conviction to the crown of glory, is carried forward only by Jesus Christ, through the various means of grace ? and is it your desire to participate in this work and all its contempla-

ted blessings? Loathing sin, renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil, do you come feeling that faith in Christ is God's only appointed means of salvation? And when you ask, May I believe? do you mean to ask, Is there warrant for one such as I, to accept of such a Christ for such a salvation? Will God grant me both the privilege and power to accept of Christ as my sacrifice, to present him as my substitute, and stand in his righteousness, with joyous confidence that because he "lives I shall live also?"

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

Or in the language of another verse of the same hymn, do you desire to say,

"My soul looks back to see
The burden thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there?"

THERE IS A WARRANT.

In drawing out your views in reference, first, to your own condition, and then as to the nature and effects of faith in Christ, I have had an object before me ; namely, so to concentrate your attention upon your condition, and the kind of remedy you really desire, as to guard you against delusion on one hand, and prepare you, on the other, to appreciate the important truth now to be submitted to your consideration.

For any soul sincerely desirous to escape from hell and fly to heaven, there is the fullest possible warrant to believe in Jesus Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life ;” more especially is this the case, where there exists a deep consciousness of personal unworthiness—a suitable appreciation of the appointed means, and a settled purpose to abandon every thing else, and depend wholly upon them. This I take to be your case, and while I might perhaps say, as is true, that the desire of grace is grace ; yet such a truth you are not now pre-

pared to appreciate ; therefore in pursuing my design of unfolding to you the fulness and sufficiency of the warrant upon which you may believe in Jesus Christ, let me ask you to consider carefully and with prayer the following suggestions.

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST A DUTY.

When the Great Teacher was on earth, certain Jews said to him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? To whom he returned this answer, "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John vi. 28, 29.

While men, therefore, are inquiring now as those did then, "What must we *work*?" the answer is the same as then, and everywhere applicable. This is the work God now specially requires, "that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

Faith in Jesus Christ is then the first duty of every man under the gospel dispensation. While the first covenant was in force, the service was called obedience; which of course

involved not only outward submission to, but inward acquiescence with, all divine requirements. Hence supreme regard for the authority which prescribed the service.

Now that which was called, under or in reference to the law, simply obedience, becomes under the gospel, the obedience of faith. Hence the Apostle Paul declares that the preaching of the gospel was by the commandment of the everlasting God, to make known to all nations for the obedience of faith, the mystery which was kept secret since the world began. Rom. xvi. 25, 26. And what in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, he calls the faith, in the sixteenth chapter, he calls obedience. Rom. i. 8, 16, 19.

Of himself he says, that he had received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations. Rom. i. 5. And the Evangelist Luke records, Acts vi. 7, "And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

The service sought and claimed by God under the gospel is an obedience of faith, a work

of faith; and a moment's consideration will enable us to perceive not only why it is called the obedience of faith, but why this must be the essential element of all obedience.

At and after the fall of man, his mind became alienated from God, and filled with fear and suspicion both as to his power and purposes. In such a state of mind, no service can be full and joyous, nor can any be really acceptable to God. Love can find no place in such a heart; and a service without love can never receive the seal of divine approbation.

To remove this, God, in his infinite condescension, has given his well beloved Son as the pledge of his reconciliation; as the surety to men, that renouncing their sins, abandoning their rebellion, their suspicion and fear, and accepting the pardon he offers in Christ, they shall be received into his favour, adopted into his family, and made heirs of eternal life. To believe in Christ, therefore, is to believe God's sincerity in the offers of pardon to the guilty, and cordially to accept and rely upon the fulness, the sufficiency of the provision he has

made for a perpetual restoration to his favour. God's word is law to the creature ; compliance with his word is obedience to it. His word commands faith in Jesus Christ : " This is my beloved Son ; hear him." Luke ix. 35. " A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me ; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you." Acts iii. 22. And this is his commandment that " we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John iii. 23. To believe in Jesus Christ as he is set forth and offered to us in the gospel, is to obey God ; it is, therefore, the obedience of faith, an approval of God's law, confidence in his faithfulness, and an acceptance of the provision he has made for reconciliation to him, and therefore of eternal salvation.

Faith in Christ is then not only obedience, but the essential element of all obedience.

The first covenant being violated becomes void ; it can therefore afford or secure no communion with God.

The second covenant, which is the gospel, is

now in force, administered by a mediator, even Christ; the acceptance of this covenant is obedience to the will of God; this obedience is faith.

That all men are bound in duty to accept this covenant, and therefore to believe in the Lord Jesus, is manifest from many considerations.

It is the duty of every creature to obey its Creator. Will any one deny this?

The Creator of men commands them to believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John iii. 23. Can this either be denied?

The law itself to which men cling with so much tenacity, requires them to render implicit obedience to God, and to use all lawful means to secure their own highest welfare. But what can compare in value with the soul and its salvation?

The law then urges the creature, and especially the sinful creature, man, to seek salvation in Jesus Christ, and thus, as the apostle declares, "the law is our schoolmaster to bring

us to Christ, that we might be justified by *faith*." Gal. iii. 24.

We might enlarge upon this point and expand the argument almost indefinitely, but it is unnecessary. He who will deny the positions taken, might feel at liberty to deny anything. And with such we cannot now contend. God now commands all men everywhere to honour the Son as they honour the Father. John v. 22, 23. He who refuses, refuses at his peril.

But if it be the duty of all men to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, then you reader, you anxious inquirer, you doubting sinner, may certainly believe. Your duty and your privilege are, in this respect at least, co-ordinate.

That which God makes your duty, he puts within the reach of appointed means; and these not only involve the purpose of God that the thing may be done; but the pledge of efficiency, through divine aid, in every scriptural use of them or dependence upon them. Hence the exhortation: "Work out your

own salvation, with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. ii. 12, 13. And hence especially the promise, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." Matt. vii. 7.

This matter of duty is not sufficiently considered; or if considered, not understood by minds exercised for the first time about personal salvation. The duty involves the privilege; and the privilege the pledge of divine acceptance in entering upon it as required.

To feel assured then that *you*, whatever specialty there may be about your case, *may* believe, you have but to settle the question of duty.

If it be your duty, it is your privilege: and while Satan may take especial pains to hide this from you, or prevail on you to reject it; yet before you can rightfully deny the one, or doubt the other, you must prove either that you are not a creature of God (for if you are, you are bound to obey him, and the obedience

of the gospel is faith in Jesus Christ); or that God requires a duty which he will not aid or enable you to perform; or that you, while surrounded with the means of grace, and with a conscience tender and distressed on account of sin—with a heart esteeming it the greatest privilege in the world to be permitted to believe in Christ, and therefore still under the quickening influences and promptings of the Holy Spirit—have either wholly sinned away your day of grace, or are already in the world of despair. But can you prove either of these things? Will you deliberately undertake to do either? If not, then admitting, in all its force, the duty, will you doubt and reject the privilege?

This is offensive to God, and ruinous both to your own peace and usefulness. What would you think of a child, who, when surrounded by special tokens of his father's favour, should say, My father does not love me; these are tokens of his favour, but they are not for me? Who when called and commanded to come to his father's outstretched

arms, should yet say, It is my duty to obey, but I fear my father will not permit me to come?

Is not such conduct to be condemned as utterly inexcusable? And yet wherein does it differ from yours? If there be any difference, is it not in favour of the child? An earthly parent may invite only to taunt, may command only to exercise authority and vex, or may repent and repel the child in the very act of coming; but this can never be with God. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Rom. xi. 29. His command involves both an invitation and a promise, and all the promises of God "in him [Christ] are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." 2 Cor. i. 20.

To doubt the privilege is to doubt the truth and faithfulness of God in Christ; and this is to tempt him to leave you a prey to your own corruptions, or to the terrors of the adversary. You will seek for peace, or hope for usefulness in vain, while you hesitate and stand aloof from Christ. Your only hope is to cry with

the distressed father, "Lord I believe: help thou mine unbelief." Mark ix. 24.

The sincere willingness on your part to accept the privilege, is the best evidence you can have that you may accept it.

Such willingness is not natural, but gracious, and therefore the assured evidence not only that God has wrought it, but that he will accept his own signature, and crown his own work with peace and joy. Be not faithless therefore, but believing. John xx. 27. In Christ you receive grace for grace, John i. 16, and your strength comes by taking hold of him. Isa. xxvii. 4. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." Isa. xl. 29—31.

In this, as in many other things, your power comes with its exercise. Does duty urge you

to accept of Christ? Though feeling utterly helpless, rise up to its fulfilment. Does the privilege open to you through the duty? Enter upon it with what strength you may, and you may soon have occasion to exclaim, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Isa. xlv. 24.

WHAT HAS BEEN MAY BE.

But let me lead you into another field of thought, where perhaps we may find something to suit your case.

Suppose we can find instances in which God has manifestly led and enabled persons to believe, who so far, at least, as overt, outward acts are considered, were much more deeply involved in guilt than you; would not this afford a strong presumptive argument that you too may have, nay, have, the same privilege?

While grace is sovereign, we cannot certainly argue from one case to another; yet the same sovereignty, which is at liberty to accept of one, is under no obligations to reject another.

While God showeth mercy to whom he will ; it is not of *necessity* but of will, that he hardens any ; see Rom. ix. 18. And his independence, as proclaimed to Moses, is still his glory, and the strong encouragement of troubled, anxious sinners, “and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.” Exod. xxxiii. 19.

When in doubt, therefore, as to a privilege for which we cannot plead an express personal warrant, we may look at the history of God’s sovereign grace, and from it conclude, at least, that if you may not hope, you may rest, you have no right to despair.

No matter what your case may be ; whether you be a Lazarus or a Dives ; a thief on the cross or a young ruler ; you may not argue similarity of treatment from mere similarity of outward condition, nor indeed from mere approximate moral character. With God, there is no respect of persons ; no sinner can deserve Divine favour ; and while no measure of personal morality or goodness can demand acceptance with God, no measure of guilt,

unless it involves blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, need exclude from his favour, or justify you in despair or even in hesitation, to accept the overtures of the gospel.

There may be such peculiarity in your case, that though to yourself, you may appear to be worse than others; nevertheless, the way being yet open, by this continual offer of the gospel and the work of the Spirit, you still have the privilege of entering into covenant with God, and finding peace through Jesus Christ. The value of examples, therefore, ought not to be lightly prized by you.

WHAT IS TRUE OF ALL?

Consider then, first, that no one has ever yet been saved but as a sinner—even a great sinner.

The very object of the gospel is to save sinners. This was the purpose for which Christ said he came. Matt. ix. 13. On the same ground he said, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” Luke xv. 7, 10. And did you never

think of the fact that the Saviour commanded the gospel to be preached first in Jerusalem. Listen to his words as addressed to his chosen disciples just before his ascension, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. "Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

"Beginning at Jerusalem;" why? That Jerusalem sinners might be saved. But how does a Jerusalem sinner differ from others? Only in the fact that they enjoyed his personal preaching and repented not; saw his miracles and believed not; devised, or consented to, or witnessed without protest his malignant persecution, his unjust condemnation, his shameful crucifixion.

Does such conduct entitle them to any especial favour? Or does it create any antecedent probability that such could be saved? By no means. Why then begin at Jerusalem?

(1.) Doubtless to display the tender, earnest, compassionate sympathy which God feels for

poor, guilty, wretched sinners. (2.) To display the mighty power of his grace as revealed through the gospel, in being able to subdue even such hearts. (3.) And very especially to show that the very chief of sinners need not despair.

If Jerusalem sinners can be saved, what other class of sinners need despair? No one is saved but as a sinner, and if God will accept one, whose lips perhaps taunted and reproached that meek sufferer, whose eyes gloated with delight upon the agony of his breaking heart, or whose hand, perchance, may be yet reeking with his blood, can any one else doubt? Especially can you?

Take the fullest measurement of your own sins you choose, can they exceed in magnitude and guilt those of the Jerusalem sinner? Can they exceed the reach of *infinite* compassion? What, my friend, can go beyond infinity? And is there not infinity of value in the blood of Christ, to redeem, to pardon, to cleanse? Admit, that you are the chief of sinners, are you more or worse? Can you be? Can any

one? Though then you be chief, here are others just as chief who are saved. Need you, can you, without new and greater sin, despair?

If in your darkness, and brooding upon your sorrows, you are ready to say, "God hath forgotten to be gracious," "he will be merciful no more;" we answer, It is not so, you are mistaken; "God is love," and therefore, "ready to forgive." 1 John iv. 8, 16. Ps. lxxxvi. 5.

Or if you ask, "What of the night?" the answer is very clear and prompt to this, as well as the prophet's question, "The morning cometh and also the night; if ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come." Isa. xxi. 11.

What has been, may be; and though it be but a peradventure, it is sufficient to encourage you to apply to Him, who has said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious; and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy."

If none are saved but as sinners; and if Jerusalem sinners may be saved, then you have

no right to despair. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come." Before I leave this point, let me recommend you to read, if you can get it, Bunyan's "Jerusalem Sinner Saved;" you will find much in it to instruct, and it may be to profit.

SPECIAL CASES.

But general truths, however useful, are not always as satisfactory as could be desired. Will the general truth cover particular and special cases enough to convince me that I too may find a place among them? This must be so; for if the general cover not the particular, either the general is not true, or the particular is removed by special exception.

To illustrate: we have the general truth stated in 1 John i. 7, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Now if this include not every sin; then it is either not true, or the one not included must be removed by special exception, and either itself or its class recited that we may know it.

But in this case the truth of every particular depends upon the truth of the universal, and hence we are justified in saying to you that if any one may believe, you may.

If the general truth, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," must cover every particular, unless specifically excepted; so in like manner must the general invitation, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17, embrace every individual, unless excluded by name or by class.

We really need therefore but the general or universal truth that the chief of sinners may believe and be saved, to present the fullest encouragement to every troubled soul; yet a few striking examples may not be without their value.

A WOMAN WHICH WAS A SINNER.

Look then at that scene as described in Luke vii. 37—50. While the Saviour was dining with a Pharisee, an incident of a peculiar and striking character occurred. Un-

expectedly a woman bathed in tears stood behind the Saviour at his feet—those tears fell upon his feet—she stooped and wiped them with her hair—she kissed them, and poured upon them her precious ointment.

Who was she? One of virtuous and respectable character and life? Directly the reverse. A woman of notoriously bad character—of immoral and dissolute life. Her very presence was an offence in that assembly, and her touch thought to be defilement. Surely, thought the host, if this is a prophet, he will know the character of this woman and forbid her his presence; yet there she stood, and wept, and washed and kissed his feet, and filled the room with the odour of the precious ointment she poured upon them. Was she not a sinner? How deeply had she fallen! Did not the Saviour know the full extent of all her crimes? Surely he did. Why then did he not spurn her from his presence? Just because he came to call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. But can there be mercy for such as she? Can she

hope to be forgiven? After all her life of sin, can she now find pardon and peace with God? Does not God abhor the sinner, and especially, one so vile as she? The Pharisee loathes her presence, and concludes against the Son of man, because he did not at once reject her, and cast her from him unpitied and unpardoned. So man may judge his fellow man; but not so He who came to seek and to save the lost. Her tears flow from a broken heart, and these acts are a public renunciation of her past life of sin, a pledge of devotion to new obedience in all time to come. Can she be accepted? Yes, great as are her sins, numerous and aggravated and vile as any one can conceive them to be, they cannot exceed the limits of divine compassion; and hence when man would command her departure, and forbid her hope, the Saviour says: "Thy sins are forgiven." "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." What words are these! Can it be? Thy sins are forgiven! "Thy sins!" all—every one? Yes, all without exception. "Thy

faith hath saved thee: go in peace." What precious words! Go in peace.

Troubled soul, is your case worse than this? Take all your sins, with all their aggravations, will they exceed the extremity of this case? If not, then arise and go at once to Him who says, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Read this passage attentively and prayerfully, and see if it do not afford a full warrant for you to cast yourself on the mercy of God in Christ.

THE THIEF UPON THE CROSS.

Here is another scene of painful, but deep interest. The day on which the Prince of Life was crucified was made memorable, not alone by that one absorbing event, but by another, in which, though numbered with the transgressors, and in form a weak and suffering man, yet he manifested the dignity of his divine nature, exercised its prerogative, and confirmed the great truth of his life, that he "came to save that which was lost."

He refused to save himself from that hour,

though in view of it, his "soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" yet the ruling object of his life could neither be forgotten nor foregone. "He came not to destroy but to save." But what opportunity could occur, in such extremity, to vindicate his divine nature and mission, as well as gratify the yearnings of his compassionate heart?

What thoughts could he spare from his own deep sorrows to sympathize with the suffering of others, or feel the deep fountain of his compassions stirred at the cry of a soul ready to perish? Could it be possible that a charm so potent could be brought to bear upon his burdened heart, so that he should forget himself, to soothe another's woe; and, while struggling with the thick coming billows of a sorrow, which none but himself could measure or endure, speak words of hope, of peace, and life, to a poor, suffering, guilty creature asking mercy at his hands!!

This wonder was signally apparent on that day of wonders. Upon whom? One of hitherto moral and respectable life? One

who by some legal wrong was subjected to unrighteous suffering, and who, though treated thus ignominiously by men, could have some hope from the fairness of his moral character with God? Far from it. He who now cries to a suffering Saviour was steeped in crime; a transgressor not only of man's laws but of God's. He was suffering justly, as he himself acknowledged for the crime he had committed against men, and was imminently exposed to the righteous condemnation of God. This too he doubtless felt, and necessarily implied in the earnest prayer he addressed to the suffering Son of God: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" Remember me! Even me! Was not such prayer presumptuous madness? How could one so vile venture to offer such a petition? Are such creatures to be admitted to the society of the sanctified in the kingdom of Christ? Can it be? Will Christ accept and pardon such?

Why such questions? What is to hinder the answer of this prayer and the admission of

this poor sinner among the sanctified in the presence of God and the Lamb?

Has not God said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy?" Exod. xxxiii. 19.

And did not the Saviour declare, "The Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost?" Luke xix. 10. Is it not, moreover, clearly said of God, "that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanse thus from all sin?" 1 John i. 7.

What then should hinder either the cry of this poor malefactor, or its answer of peace from the Saviour? If the lost may be saved, why not this one? Could one be more lost?

If the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin, are the sins of this man beyond its power? And if God says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." (Isa. lv. 1,) may not this soul come?

But is he not a vile sinner, and utterly unworthy of such a blessing or privilege? Certainly; but what of that? Are men saved because they deserve to be? I thought the

gospel was a proclamation of grace, that salvation by grace was its great glory. Do not you so understand it? If so, then the very fact that he is a vile, unworthy sinner, makes him the fitter object of grace. The idea, that because he is a great sinner, he cannot be admitted to the mercy of God and the society of the pure and blessed, is wholly inconsistent with the gospel. It emanates from a legal spirit, is pharisaical and self-righteous.

Mercy can be extended only to the vile, the guilty, the undeserving. The blessed at God's right hand are but vile sinners saved by grace. Salvation is the bestowment upon them of undeserved favour, and involves the cleansing, sanctifying power of the Spirit to transform them into the likeness of Christ.

So the Saviour thought; and therefore when this cry reached his ears, he spurned it not, nor did he reproach him for being a vile, unworthy sinner, but promptly said to him, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Here then we have two great facts at which

to look. First, that the thief upon the cross was indeed a great sinner, a sinner undeserving of any favour at the hand of God: yet, secondly, the Lord Jesus, even in the midst of his own sufferings, heard his penitent, believing prayer, and accorded to him the assured hope of eternal life in his heavenly kingdom. Great as were his sins, they neither deterred him from applying to the Lord Jesus for deliverance from them; nor did they cause this compassionate Redeemer to refuse his application. Whatever he was, and as he was, the Saviour despised him not, but pardoned and accepted him as righteous for his own name's sake.

Does not this case afford sufficient encouragement for you to cast yourself as you are upon the mercy of this tender sympathizing Saviour? He rejected not a poor degraded convict, will he reject you? He despised not the cry of one whose crimes had brought him to the cross, will he withhold from you the relief you need?

You may be indeed guilty; but are you

more guilty than this dying thief? Are you even as bad? Admitting all that you can properly think or say of yourself, yet if Christ withheld not the smile of his favour and the assurance of his acceptance from the crucified thief, have you any right to feel that you may not believe and be saved in like manner? You need a fountain in which to wash away your guilt; but is there not a fountain opened? And may you not say, in the beautiful and expressive language of a familiar hymn,

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there may I as vile as he
Wash all my sins away?

Can you still have any cause to doubt or fear? Beware lest you induce a morbid condition of mind, which will preclude your perception of the most appropriate truth, and the most scriptural encouragement to cast yourself upon the Lord. Many do this; you may, and thus grieve the Holy Spirit, till he leave you to long and bitter conflicts with your sins.

This has been done in many cases, and may be in yours. The way is now open; will you enter at once? The Saviour clearly says to you.

“Just as thou art, without one trace
Of love, or joy, or inward grace,
Or meetness for the heavenly place,
O guilty sinner, come.”

Will you come now?

SAUL OF TARSAUS.

But here is still another case.

A few pages back we were speaking of Jerusalem sinners. Let us look again at the sinners of that city. There is a large crowd of people, and all very much excited—watch them a moment—look at those men in the centre; they cast off their outer garments and throw them at the feet of a young man, who heartily approves their purpose, and urges them to its fulfilment. They stoop and gather up stones, and watch, with indignant and impatient anger, one near them, whose every look betokens a calm, fearless, yet meek and loving spirit. Their rage burns intensely;

they can restrain it no longer; they rush upon him, and stone him to death! Who is this man? The proto-martyr Stephen. Who the young man that held the clothes of them that did this deed, and applauded all as a service done to God? Saul of Tarsus.

Who was he? And what has he to do with a subject like this? It was he that had that wonderful vision of the Lord, near Damascus, and became pre-eminently a servant of the crucified Nazarene and the great Apostle of the Gentiles. What! this the man, who travelled, laboured, and wrote, and suffered so much for the cause and kingdom of Christ! This man, who was "exceedingly mad" against all Christians, and persecuted them even unto strange cities! Acts xxvi. 11. This man, who by his own showing was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious! 1 Tim. i. 13. This man, with his heart full of enmity to God, and his hands reeking even with the blood of suffering disciples, this man pardoned and accepted of God? Can it be! Was he permitted and enabled to believe? Does God receive such

sinners? Does the blood of Christ cleanse from such guilt? Yes, it is even so. Saul of Tarsus was accepted of God for Christ's sake, and became an eminently godly man. He believed and was saved.

Is your case worse than his? Have you openly blasphemed, and persecuted, and injured the church of God? Yet Saul did all this. And though he did it, he was still permitted to believe; and believing, was "accepted in the Beloved." Eph. i. 6.

Why then should you hesitate? Though you had done deeds even perfectly similar yet will not the case now before you fully warrant even you to come? Yes, this example of mercy encourages you to say, in the language of humble confidence,

"Just as I am—without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee;
O Lamb of God, I come.

A GROUP OF CASES.

But here are numerous other examples, to which we can indeed scarcely more than refer, but upon which you can dwell at your leisure; and from them draw much encouragement for one truly oppressed with a sense of guilt and unworthiness before God.

If the greatness of a man's sins will exclude him from the privilege of believing, then all men will be excluded; for one sin, even the smallest, is of magnitude sufficient to warrant his eternal condemnation. Sin, in its own nature, separates and excludes from God; so that while "some sins in themselves, and by reason of their several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others;" yet "*every* sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come." All sins are great in their relation to the perfect and holy law of God; all, therefore, may exclude from the mercy of God through faith. Especially may the sins involved in the present group be regarded as great, and those who committed

them, beyond the reach of hope ; and yet we find that God did not deal with them as they deserved, he did not reward them according to their iniquities, they were great sinners, but they were forgiven ; and forgiveness can come only through faith, hence they were permitted and enabled to believe.

Have you ever read the sad story of David's sin ? I take it for granted that you have. I suppose too, you have read the Psalm in which he recorded his deep penitential feelings. Psa. li.

How fearful was his fall !—the sin he committed, a cruel and bloody one—a violation of the seventh commandment—then to conceal this, a violation of the sixth ! What a complication of guilt ! How it struggles to conceal itself !

Can such combined and aggravated sin be forgiven ? Can the royal sinner be restored to Divine favour ? We might think not. Judging on merely human principles, we should say he ought not to escape, and could not be

admitted to share the mercy of One who hates iniquity and cannot look upon sin.

So the royal culprit himself judged and feared. Hear how he pleads in that Psalm, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities." "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

Mercy exists only for the undeserving. Mercy alone could relieve him from his dreadful guilt; therefore he pleads for this, for this alone. Did he receive it? Certainly. He felt, and therefore he left it on record, "The sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Mercy was accorded to him, and therefore he could say, in reference to this as well as other portions of his history, as in the 130th Psalm, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my sup-

plications. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." Or as in the 40th Psalm: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." Or again as in the 66th Psalm: "Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me; but verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."

"My thoughts are not your thoughts,

neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isa. lv. 8, 9.

Only on the fact thus stated, can we account for such wonders of grace as are here recorded. Saul the persecutor, David the adulterer and murderer, were forgiven; not only forgiven, but admitted to a sacred nearness to God, and made eminently useful to the church and the world. Did e'er such grace and mercy meet before? Could men ever imagine that even God would reveal such, to creatures so guilty as we? Yet here it is. It is God who manifests it, and well may we admire and adore.

"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Mal. iii. 6.

Are there other such cases? Many. Here is a remarkable one—one like the last, found in the palace of royalty. The story of Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, is indeed a sad one.

Taught from his childhood the knowledge of the true God, having the example of a pious God-fearing father, and surrounded by forms and usages of divine appointment calculated to strengthen and sustain upright and noble, to say nothing of holy principles and aims, and coming too to the throne at an early age, it might have been hoped, and doubtless was, by the spritually minded of God's people, that the good would prevail, and that a pure life and a righteous reign would be exhibited by the son of so distinguished a ruler as Hezekiah.

But alas ! holy precept, pious example, seemed to be lost, the evil predominated, and whether from his mother's influence, or that of his counsellors and associates, it soon became apparent that a father's precepts and prayers were to be without present fruit, and that the tide of iniquity, idolatry, and sin, repressed by the father, was about to run to an unexampled height under the son. So, too painfully proved the result. The work of reformation by the father was not only ar-

rested, but swept away. So that in the daring madness of his impiety he set up an idol in the very house of God, and abandoned himself to the cruelest, most revolting, and degraded acts of superstition and idolatry. While of his father it is said, "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him of all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him; 2 Kings xviii. 5; of Manasseh the indelible record is made, "He seduced them [his people] to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel." 2 Kings xxi. 9. And again: "Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." 2 Kings xxi. 16.

Such is the sad picture of Manasseh's life. Did he ever find mercy? Could even mercy stoop to one so vile, so degraded? Yes, it is even so recorded. By and by afflictions came; captivity and deep distress fell upon him.

Where then were his idol gods? Where his guilty counsellors and associates? Could they help or hear him? In vain would he seek to them. To whom else could he call? To the God of his father? Him he had forsaken; disobeyed his law; corrupted his worship; dishonoured his name; seduced his people to falsehood and idolatry; and was now suffering the tokens of his displeasure; could he now call upon that God? upon him whose mercy-seat he had despised, and whose Holy Place he had desecrated with the presence of a hideous idol? call upon him, with a life loathsome by crime, his hands yet reeking with innocent blood! his conscience now accusing him, and arraying not only his open but his secret sins before him! Would it not now be the height of presumption, an aggravation of his sin, even to look towards one whom he had so deeply grieved and offended? So, very likely Manasseh may have thought; so, the tempter may have suggested; it is useless and hopeless to think now, that God will hear you; rather, as Job was advised, “curse

him and die ;” so, many think and feel at the present day. But memory was possibly now busy as well as conscience ; remembrance of truth taught to him as well as of evil done by him. His father found mercy upon a sick bed. The same father doubtless had taught him how God had remembered him, had taught him how merciful and gracious the divine character was, and urged a dependence upon that mercy which had been so signally manifested to himself. Perhaps too he may have read and now remembered the words of Samuel to the people of Israel, “Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; and turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake.” 1 Sam. xii. 20—22. It may be also, that divine promise, so adapted to his case, may have been recalled to his mind; “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” Psalm li.

15. And the Psalmist's experience may possibly have been revived in his memory: "I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night and ceased not; my soul refused to be comforted." Psalm lxxvii. 1, 2. Or as in another, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Psalm xxxiv. 4, 6.

Certain it is, however, that though we may not be able to trace the history of his convictions and struggles, yet he was led to prayer, and through prayer to the peace of forgiveness and acceptance with God.

It is written of him, "And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his

kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.

If such could be forgiven, who should despair? Have you reason longer to doubt, to hesitate, and refuse to cast yourself upon the mercy of God in Christ? Press to his feet.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream,
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him ;
This he gives you,
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

Unless you can show some enormity in your case which no mortal has ever suspected, you cannot insist that you are worse than Manasseh. Even if you are worse, you have no right to limit the mercy of God, and say, that he could forgive no one whose sins exceeded in turpitude and guilt, those of this man. But if your sins simply equal them, then, if these were forgiven, yours can be. And while God calls you, you have but one thing you can do without sin ; that is, to believe at once, to accept of Jesus Christ as he is offered in

the gospel. Christ is offered to you for all that you need. Be careful how you longer doubt, how you refuse, lest it shall be found in the end that you reject the mercy of God against your own soul. Rather let me urge you to say in deep sincerity,

“ Here Lord, I give myself away,
’Tis all that I can do.”

“ On thy kind arms, incarnate God,
I cast my guilty, helpless soul ;
I own the justice of thy rod,
Yet all my sins on thee I roll.

My God, accept me as I am ;
For such as I, thy blood was shed ;
My heart rejoices in thy plan
To grant me life, who once was dead.

I can no longer doubt or fear ;
My heart though vile, to thee I yield,
Thou’st brought thy great salvation near ;
Be thou my Righteousness and Shield.”

Lest there should be a lingering suspicion, let me refer you to that remarkable combination of cases found in 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. “ Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor idolaters,

nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." What a catalogue! Who could suppose that any such could be saved? Surely, if any may be thought beyond the reach of mercy, sinners of these classes must be? Can it be possible that such material can be wrought into the real texture, the substantial elements of the church of Christ? Who would be willing to unite with a church composed of such people? Is it not degrading to be associated with persons of such impure, immoral, and sinful lives? And will not Christ be dishonoured and his gospel rejected, if pardon and acceptance with God be offered so freely? So, doubtless, the proud and the self-righteous may feel and reason: so, doubtless, all who, ignorant of God's righteousness, go about to establish their own; all who have never seen the depths of depravity in their own hearts, nor felt the helplessness of sin. But so thinks not the Holy Spirit, for such he calls; so thinks

not Christ, for such he came to seek and to save ; so thinks not the Apostle, for as a faithful recorder and publisher of the truth, he adds, "And such were some of you !" Some such then, can be pardoned and accepted through faith in the Divine Redeemer ! Yes, it is true ; for it is written, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Could more encouragement be wanted ? Could more be given ? To which one of these classes do you belong ? To any, or none ? If literally to none, does your guilt exceed that of any ? If not, then from all, if not from each one of these examples you may gather argument sufficient to warrant you to fall, as you are, at the feet of the Redeemer, and take him as your all. Will you now do so ? How various these cases ; how fearful the guilt ; how deep the sinfulness of some of them ! Yet they found warrant to believe, why may not you ?

But these are all cases taken from Scrip-

ture, are there none others, none more modern, nearer our own days? Plenty; but can they be more appropriate, more fully illustrate the great truth, that the word of God affords sufficient warrant for the chief of sinners to seek and expect in the name of Christ, a free and absolute remission of all his sins? The old wine is the best. It were useless to refer to others on the supposition that these failed to make this truth sufficiently clear: yet as additional illustration, and to show that the grace of God is unchangeable, that his word never returns to him void, let us dwell a moment on some similar facts developed in the history of the church since the days of the apostles.

Beginning with Augustine, how fully do we find the truth we are presenting, sustained! His own confessions exhibit to us a type of depravity and a course of sin, which but for these we could scarce believe possible. And yet these very confessions are the result of a change which nothing could have effected but this very grace of which we speak. From depths and from kinds and courses of sin,

to you now impossible ; from years of wandering he was at length brought to sit at the feet of Jesus, a most signal instance of a sinner saved by grace, a sinner without a plea, without a possible warrant but that furnished by the offer of pardon and acceptance with God perfectly gratuitous. This offer he was enabled to accept, and accepting was saved. His guilt was forgiven, and the faith he once despised, he preached for many long years.

But if this be still too far off, let me remind you of more familiar cases ; of Col. Gardiner, a history of whose life you will find in almost every Sabbath-school Library—of John Bunyan, who for wickedness was the terror even of his companions—of John Newton, whose crimes against God and man were of the deepest, darkest character, so overwhelming to himself, that to find relief he even meditated self-murder ; and if you doubt that such sinners could be forgiven, read the Pilgrim's Progress of Bunyan, or his "Heart's Ease for Heart's Ache," or the Jerusalem Sinner Saved, or the Cardiphonia of Newton, or the

sweet volume of Olney Hymns. In these works they spoke and sung of things which they themselves had experienced, and the conviction must strike every mind, (1) that they regarded themselves as the chief of sinners; and yet (2) felt warranted to believe and rest with joyful confidence upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Hear how Newton sings, in praise of the great Physician by whom he was relieved.

How lost was my condition
'Till Jesus made me whole!
There is but one Physician
Can cure a sin-sick soul.
Next door to death he found me
And snatched me from the grave,
To tell to all around me
His wondrous power to save.
From men great skill professing
I thought a cure to gain;
But this proved more distressing,
And added to my pain.
Some said that nothing ailed me,
Some gave me up for lost:
Thus every refuge failed me,
And all my hopes were crossed.

A dying, risen Jesus
Seen by the eye of faith,
At once from danger frees us
And saves the soul from death.
Then come to this Physician ;
His help he'll freely give :
He makes no hard condition,
'Tis only, Look and live.

Are you in greater extremity, than "next door to death?" Newton was there indeed, and yet found life and peace in believing; why may not you?

We desire neither to astonish nor gratify by the number and variety of examples; but simply to show, that while one instance, though a striking one, and in itself sufficient, might yet be regarded as exceptional, rather than as indicating the rule; there are numbers so great, that no one not resolved to doubt, could indulge the slightest suspicion of difficulty in the way of the really sin-sick and sin-burdened soul. We say then to you, look at any one of these, and so far as example can have force, they assure you, that even you, extreme as you may really think your own case, even

you have warrant now to believe. And if any one will give you warrant, then the whole will not only do it, but leave you without excuse for the delay of a moment.

Could we call up Wesley and Whitefield, Simeon and Legh Richmond, and Henry Martyn, and Cecil, and Bickersteth; or Edwards, or Finley, or Davies, or Payson, and hear the testimony they would give on this vital question, we should gain nothing as to the fact itself. This indeed cannot be more fully established; but its wide-spread uniformity—a uniformity, universal so far as observation has extended, would be deeply impressed upon our minds. And the clear establishment of this uniformity must be attended with one of two results, either to resolve your every doubt—to dispel your every fear; or leave you involved in the fearful guilt of unbelief: an unbelief maintained where all classes of minds have joyfully yielded; where the refined and cultivated, the acute and logical have, alike, accepted the truth and rested upon it, with the humble and unlearned. A refusal,

on your part, under such circumstances, to believe can be accounted for only on the ground of incapacity to perceive the nature, and feel the force of testimony; or a wilful purpose doggedly to resist all argument, and all evidence in the premises.

If such be the case with you, further parley would be both unwise and hurtful; but earnestly hoping that it is not, I beg you carefully to ponder one consideration further.

THE ARGUMENT DIRECT, FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE.

This argument is contained under various forms, and is fully conclusive under each.

1. Duty. Faith in Christ is commanded; and being commanded is a duty.

“This is my beloved Son; hear him.” Luke ix. 35. “A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.” Acts iii. 22.

“And this is his commandment, that we

should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John iii. 23.

This duty is universal. No one class of men is exempt. The command is to preach the gospel to every creature. Mark xvi. 15. And as faith is the acceptance of the gospel, every creature is required to believe it; else some may reject it without guilt; but this cannot be. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” John iii. 18, 19.

The gospel enhances the responsibility of men; and as it is the proclamation of God’s terms of pardon to the rebellious—of mercy to the undeserving; it is clear that every creature refusing to believe refuses to yield his rebellion, and rejects the offered mercy, thus aggravating his guilt, and braving the terrors of the Most High.

But does God make that a duty, which he

will not permit to be done? Does he command, what he will not aid and accept? Far be such conduct from him. The duty involves and secures the great privilege. This duty, moreover, is irrespective of the number or magnitude of the sins committed.

It has no reference whatever to the question whether you have committed many or few, great or small sins. You may have committed but one, or millions; still the duty remains unchanged. God deals with you as a sinful creature. If you have but one sin, he offers to you a gratuitous pardon for it in Jesus Christ. If you have sins in countless multitude chargeable upon you, he offers you a pardon and acceptance equally gratuitous. He commands you equally to believe, and, therefore, assures you equally of the privilege. Do you deny the duty? If not, then embrace the privilege. And as the duty is imperative and pressing, so the privilege is immediate and entreating.

Decide, my friend, and decide quickly. God says to you, "Go work to-day in my vine-

yard." Matt. xxi. 28. "Work to-day," not to-morrow. And what is the work thus required at your hand? Nothing more, nothing less, than that which I have already urged upon you, even as it is written, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John vi. 29.

2. Invitation combined with promise.

"Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Isa. xlv. 22.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isa. lv. 1, 3.

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matt. xi. 28, 29.

These are but examples of the nature and kind of invitations and promises found throughout the Scriptures. We need not enlarge; from these learn all. They include all classes of persons; "all the ends of the earth," means every creature; and as though this were not enough, they specify the thirsty, the hungry, the poor, the thoughtless, the blind, the deaf, the weary, the heavy laden, the tempted; and as though even this were not enough, the words of inspiration almost close, uttering the unlimited invitation, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17.

Clearer warrant none need desire,—none can have, than God's invitation, and God's promise. He against whom you have sinned—he has provided a Saviour, and invites you to partake of a gratuitous pardon simply by accepting the mediation of this divinely appointed Saviour. He invites with a full knowledge of your sins—their number, their aggravations, and their desert of hell; and can you desire other warrant?

3. Exhortation combined with entreaty and expostulation.

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Isa. lv. 2.

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Isa. lv. 6, 7.

“Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways and live? Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed: and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth,

saith the Lord God : wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Ezek. xviii. 23, 31, 32.

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked : but that the wicked turn from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

"Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Isa. i. 18.

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? how shall I deliver thee, Israel ? how shall I make thee as Admah ? how shall I set thee as Zeboim ? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Hosea xi. 8.

What mean all these and other Scriptures of the same character, if they do not fully warrant the unconditional acceptance of the gospel offer ? If they do not, not only authorize every sinner to whom they come to

believe God's mercy, but regard him as rejecting that mercy without cause if he do not believe? If there be force in language, it must be so. What interest, what motive, would God have for addressing men thus, if they were not welcome to come?

Among men to stand proof against such exhortation, such expostulatory entreaty, is to incur a charge of hardened insensibility or perverse obstinacy, which leaves an indelible stain upon the character; but can any one treat God in this manner without incurring a charge of deeper, blacker guilt? God invites, then exhorts, then with earnest entreaty expostulates; and will you yet say, He means not me; I have no interest in all that he promises, and am not the object of any expostulation on his part? When your very case is described, and your very class is designated, still you say, All this is not for me.

Take care that you make not this the truth in reference to yourself. The privilege offered to you, and which you put from you, has an awful responsibility connected with it. "Be-

cause I have called," says God, "and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early but they shall not find me. Prov. i. 24—28. You may bring about this issue, fearful as it is. Be entreated in time. While the exhortation is addressed to you, yield to its gracious influence, and cast yourself upon the outstretched arms of a waiting Saviour.

But this warrant arises again in another form.

4. As a fruit, or object, of the mission of Christ and its publication in the gospel. Without this mission, this incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, such warrant could never have been accorded to any sinner;

not only not to the greatest and vilest, but not to the smallest or purest.

Sin alienates between God and man. Its guilt must be atoned, its offence removed, or reconciliation never can be possible. But man can atone for the guilt of sin, only by suffering its penalty; this would involve endless punishment, and of course exclude all prospect of happiness and peace. The only relief therefore can come through another; and hence pardon is extended to the sinner, not for any thing he has done, but for what has been done for him.

Hence we have the record, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." John iii. 17. How are men saved through him? "He that believeth shall be saved." Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." John iii. 36. ——"Even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 14, 15.

Faith in Christ is the means of salvation. For Christ therefore to die that the world through him might be saved, is to die necessarily that faith might be exercised, and of course that a warrant for faith might exist.

That this reasoning is correct we are assured by the testimony of this same Evangelist, who declares that he wrote his gospel for the very purpose of affording a warrant, an opportunity or ground of faith. "And he knoweth that he saith true that ye *might believe*." John xix. 35. "But these are written, that ye *might believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John xx. 31. The same thing is also clearly asserted by the apostle Peter: "Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory; that your *faith* and hope *might be* in God." 1 Pet. i. 20, 21.

We think it just, then, and therefore safe to say, that the very object for which Christ

came, for which he died, for which God raised him from the dead, was that this warrant might exist, this great privilege be accorded to men.

And now, what say you? If the very existence of the gospel is a witness that you, whatever your condition as a sinner, have ample warrant to go to Christ that you may be saved, will you go? If the whole Scripture record is intended to assure you of God's willingness to receive the very chief of sinners for Christ's sake, then by what right do you hesitate to believe it? By what right do you put any judgment or opinion of your own between your soul and Jesus Christ? God says, Come: you say, I dare not. God replies with emphasis, But you may. You still rejoin, Nay, I may not. What means this? Can you justify it? Who knows best what God will permit you to do? He himself, or you? Delay no more; but fall at his feet, confess your unbelief, and accept with joy his great salvation.

Other arguments we will not now offer.

Enough has been presented to establish this truth, viz : that if you believe not, and therefore perish, it will not be because God has given no warrant to believe. On the contrary, you remain in unbelief in despite of all that can authorize you to seek and find eternal life now, in Jesus Christ.

A RECAPITULATION.

Let us see what has been ascertained in the premises.

To meet every such case as yours in the fullest possible manner, we have shown that a warrant for your faith may be clearly and fully established on the ground that it is the *duty* of all men to believe; then by an induction of examples, both from Scriptural and modern times, have seen that men of all classes, and some even of the very vilest have been admitted to faith; have been accepted in their acceptance of Jesus Christ, and incidentally have shown the nature and force of this testimony; and that to evade it, every exceptional case must be recited, not merely inferred.

This is a wide field, and each example might well be made a separate study. Sin assumes so many forms, and afflicts the soul with so many evils, evils deeply seated and obstinate, that it becomes important to consider and exhibit the cures in the worst of cases.

“The worst of all diseases
Is light, compared with sin ;
On every part it seizes,
But rages most within.
Tis palsy, plague, and fever,
And madness—all combined ;
And none but a believer,
The least relief can find.”

We have, therefore, purposely made a large induction, hoping that thus every case may be met.

In addition to all this, we have seen that the Scriptures directly warrant this acceptance of Christ, by urging it as a duty—a duty irrespective of the extent of a man's guilt: by invitations and promises, and these often, not general, but specific; by earnest expostulatory entreaty, and finally, by assuring us that the

very design of the death and resurrection of Christ, together with its record or publication by the sacred writers was, that this warrant might also be proclaimed wherever sinners are found. The gospel would be no gospel, but for this great and glorious truth—this, which gives it adaptedness and force wherever proclaimed, in America or Europe, in Africa or Asia, in Australia or Micronesia.

The gospel is proclaimed to all, because God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and requires—warrants all who hear it to believe, “obey, and take the promised” blessing.

WHAT YET REMAINS ?

If by so many routes we have arrived at the same terminus, may we not conclude that this is indeed the great central spot to which all things tend ? That everything conspires to convince the sinner that he, even in his deepest degradation, in the deepest consciousness of his guilt, may go,—has a warrant to

go to Him, who is “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him?” Heb. vii. 25.

Does anything therefore yet remain? Nothing necessarily; but still there are some minds so sensitive, some difficulties so unyielding; some temptations so subtle and persistent, that calm unbroken rest cannot be maintained. There is a conflict between hope and fear; joy and sorrow follow each other, sometimes in lengthened intervals, sometimes in rapid succession.

In the struggles of life, new positions are assumed, new duties arise, new questions emerge. New sins also may be committed—old sins may be revived; old corruptions work in new channels; old evidences, experiences, and comforts, grow dim in the memory, or are thrown into unfavourable positions to be seen in their true character. Hence the conscience is often startled, and the heart overwhelmed by the sudden and vivid suggestion, “You are too late; there is no hope;” or, “You are yet

a sinner, a hypocrite, and unworthy of any place in the service of Christ."

Such suggestions, as by the power of a fearful hallucination, absorb the attention of the mind, and preclude the discovery of the error which is now oppressing it, prevent the detection of the subtle temptation under which it labours, and by which its peace has been destroyed.

Dark struggles follow ; long depression of mind ensues, activity ceases, hopes are abandoned, and despair sits brooding upon the heart. Is all lost? Not yet. May there be hope? Yes, abundant. Where, whence? In the sinner? No. In man? Not the least. Then whence? Christ still lives. The warrant to fly to him yet continues in full force, and his power to save remains unbroken. "He is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Heb. xiii. 8.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THIS WARRANT.

Is this warrant sufficient to meet such variety and combination of new cases? Is not

something else necessary? or may not something be united with it to advantage? It is all that is requisite. Alone, it is omnipotent. Combined with anything else, it is weakened and destroyed.

Let us look for a moment at this warrant. What is it? It is God's command, to repent and believe the gospel—his invitation to accept of Christ as the only Mediator between God and men—his offer to accept and save every sinner coming to him, on the foundation of Christ's work and satisfaction to the Divine law.

It is, in short, a proclamation of pardon on God's part, to guilty rebels against his government. It announces distinctly that sin can be forgiven, that rebellion can be pardoned in the case of every one accepting Jesus Christ as his Surety before God.

Here then the question returns, Is this sufficient? Is this all that the sinner, any sinner, needs to authorize him at once to accept of Christ as his full salvation? There can be but one answer. It is not only all that he needs, but

the only thing which can confer any warrant whatever. That this may appear, consider—

1. God alone has a right to command or invite any one to return to him. He alone has the right to say on what terms, in what way he will accept the sinful and rebellious. No creature, however exalted, can on his own motion, give warrant or encouragement to any sinner to hope for pardon and acceptance with God.

But if God himself does it, then all who hear it may comply, the first moment they comprehend either the command or invitation. Nay, they must comply, or prefer to remain in sin and rebellion.

The child who rejects a father's authority, and spends years in multiplied acts of hostility and insult to that father, needs no other—can have no other warrant to return and expect forgiveness than the father's own command or invitation. If the father command, he may instantly obey; if he invite, he may instantly accept, and at once partake of all the benefits resulting from such return. No authority but

the father's could warrant it; but if this be given, all is given that can be required.

So with God's command addressed to you, sinner, to repent; you need no other warrant. Nay, you must obey, or add fresh rebellion to the fearful catalogue of your crimes. If God invites, you have such warrant, that to doubt or question it becomes at once an increased and aggravated offence. If Gabriel invited, you might hesitate, and ask for his authority; but when God himself commands and invites, nothing is left but to comply. What could strengthen such a warrant? Can anything be added to God's authority? Is not his word final?

As the Supreme Judge, no one but himself can know or declare whether he will remit the penalty of his law in favour of any transgressor, and if he will, on what terms, and to whom? But when he himself declares his own arrangement so to do, and invites the guilty to come and partake of his clemency, then his word becomes all that can be required in any possible condition.

Rest then in this ; you will find it sufficient for every exigence through which you may be called to pass.

2. But consider again, that in the nature of things, nothing can be substituted for, or added to this warrant ; and, therefore, it must stand in itself sufficient and alone.

The warrant is God's word of command, of invitation, of promise and entreaty addressed to the sinner to turn and live.

Who can substitute anything for this ? God has given the warrant. Who can come in and set this aside, and establish something in its stead ? Can angels—can men—can any creature, or any number of creatures ? Would it be safe to follow such ?

Who can add anything ? If there be no authority to substitute, can there be to add new provisions ? Who will venture upon such a scheme ?

The thing is in itself impossible ; and if there can be neither substitute nor addition, then this warrant stands for every sinner in every condition sufficient and alone.

But here many questions arise which often cause great perplexity to the sinner, and under the influence of which he is often led practically to attempt what reason and truth declare he cannot do.

PERPLEXING QUESTIONS.

1. Do not the Scriptures require repentance, before God can or will show me any marks of favour or mercy? Must I not be a great deal better before I can expect that Christ will look upon and receive me?

I have not lived as I ought, and must prepare myself by prayer and reading the Scriptures and doing better in every way before I can be ready to accept God's invitation; before I can feel that I am permitted so to do. Must I not?

Here are as many mistakes, or at least misapprehensions, as questions.

True: God requires sinners to repent; and without repentance he will not receive any one to his favour; but is not the acceptance of God's invitation, the resting of your soul for

pardon upon God's promise, the very repentance you need ? Is it not that which he requires ? You have hitherto refused to do this ; and what could more distinctly manifest a repentance for your past course of life, than a turning to God upon his own invitation, upon the warrant of his own promise, and a hearty acceptance of the finished righteousness of Christ as the only ground of your hope ? And would not this be at once doing a great deal better, than you have ever done ? You have not, indeed, lived as you ought, but would not this be the highest act of right and duty to God which you could do ? What ought you to do better than to turn from your sinful ways, and accept God's free promise of a free and absolute pardon in the name and for the sake of Christ ?

The truth is, you are overlooking the ground upon which God proposes to save you, and substituting a condition of your own which he neither requires nor sanctions, upon which to be accepted before him.

He proposes to pardon you absolutely on

the ground of Christ's merit. And accordingly invites you to come and accept without money and without price.

This you overlook, indeed practically deny; and attempt to acquire, by your repentance, your doing better, something to make you acceptable to Christ, something to recommend you to him.

Thus you turn from God's foundation to lay one for yourself, substituting your own for his. He says, Come as you are, upon Christ's merits. You say, "I must repent and do better, first, and then expect God to receive me."

He proposes, let me repeat, to accept and save you wholly for the merits of the Lord Jesus, and invites you to partake of pardon and peace, on this foundation only: you refuse and delay until you can add something of your own, in the way of repentance, doing better, and such like.

This is, on your part, a change of the whole ground of salvation. It is another gospel. God's provision is for the ungodly; yours is

for the sinner partly reformed, doing better, and not so bad as before. God's plan regards Christ's merits, only and alone, as sufficient to procure eternal salvation; yours rejects Christ's merits as insufficient, unless supplemented by some improvement, reformation, or goodness of your own. After securing something of your own to add to Christ's, you can then feel that God is ready to accept you.

My friend, you will find nothing but delusion in this direction. You are on another foundation, and can never attain real permanent peace with God. Christ is our peace; not something of our own in addition to his righteousness.

If you make yourself better, as shown in a former Tract, ("Only believe,") you put yourself out of the range of gospel promises and of course must perish.

But after all, what is a sinner to do, who feels his guilt and unworthiness to be so exceeding great, as utterly to disqualify him for an entrance into God's presence?

Oppressed with such a perception of his con-

dition, what is he to do? Do? Nothing, but to take God at his own word. When he knows your whole condition, and notwithstanding, says, "Come unto me, I have made the amplest provision for your acceptance, peace, and safety;" what ought you to do, but with his word of promise in your ear and heart, cast yourself upon his loving arms of mercy and salvation?

Can compassion, can love like this, be met in any other manner? Do as the prodigal did, when, all conscious of his vileness, he not only resolved to return to his Father's house; but actually did so in his very rags, with all the marks of his degradation and wretchedness about him. "I am not worthy to be called thy son," says he. Yet he delayed not, refused not to accept the best robe, the shoes on his feet and the ring on his finger, until he could remove his own rags and filth. The father saw him, accepted, and embraced him as he was. The deepest gratitude and the strongest emotions of true penitence alike forbade delay for any purpose. Unworthy as

he felt himself, he could but yield, and yielding secured all that the father's heart prompted him to give.

Thus you must do. Anything else is to resist the grace of God ; to make your own judgment of your condition not only the rule of your conduct towards God, but the measure of his gifts and graces to you.

You certainly have no right to put your unworthiness, though you saw and felt it a thousand times more deeply than you do, between the fountain of God's mercy and your soul's salvation. The merits of a Saviour's blood, not your own deserts, constitute God's measure of grace : resist then no longer.

“ Ho ! ye needy, come and welcome ;
God's free bounty glorify.”

“ Pore upon your sins no longer,
Well I know their mighty guilt ;
But my love than death is stronger,
I my blood have freely spilt ;
Though your heart has long been hardened,
Look on me, it soft shall grow ;
Past transgressions shall be pardoned,
And I'll wash you white as snow.”

Thus Jesus calls you ; let your reply be in the appropriate sentiment, if not the language of another, of Newton's hymns,

“Lord, thou hast won ; at length I yield ;
My heart, by mighty grace compelled,
Surrenders all to thee :
Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love ?
Love conquers even me.”

The warrant is all sufficient, and an immediate acceptance of it will be and is the best possible evidence of gratitude to God, of repentance for sin, and a fixed purpose of new obedience.

Delay will but multiply your difficulties, and endanger your acceptance at any other time. Be wise, therefore, in season and turn, as the poor prodigal, even now, to your Father's outstretched arms.

2. But is it not presumptuous for one so guilty, and so long, as well as so recently in the slime and filth of sin, to expect an immediate acceptance with God, and an unconditional pardon of all my guilt ?

Does not such a doctrine offer a premium for sin, and expose the gospel to reproach before the world?

Why, or how presumptuous? Does not God invite? And when we answer the exact condition of those to whom the invitation is extended, can there be presumption in accepting it? If the vile are invited, the blind, the deaf, the lost, may not each one in this condition embrace the opportunity of relief? And if the invitation specifies the time, as now, the present, passing moment, may not the vile wash and be clean at once?

Was it presumptuous for the poor leper who said to Christ, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," to accept and rejoice in the immediate cure which the Saviour extended, when he replied, "I will, be thou clean?" Matt. viii. 2.

Was it presumptuous for the weeping penitent at the Saviour's feet to accept the gracious pardon he granted when he said, "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace?" Luke xviii. 48—50. Or the poor

paralytic on whom he bestowed both cure and pardon in the same moment? Matt. ix. 1—7.

Can it ever be presumptuous to obey God? So far from it, that to disobey, or for any reason or judgment of your own even to delay, becomes an act both offensive to God, and daringly presumptuous in his sight. He specifies the duty or privilege, the time in which he desires attention to it, and the character of all from whom he expects compliance; and these very persons pause and say, “Oh no, we cannot do it now, it would be presumption!” Presumption to do what you are commanded—to accept what is unconditionally offered to you! What madness thus to act! The presumption is on the side of delay or neglect. If the fact that you have long been a sinner, that your guilt is unspeakably great, hinders not the command or the invitation; then it cannot originate or sustain a charge of presumption against you, in obeying the one or accepting the other.

Nor can it offer any premium to sin to extend a free and immediate pardon to the trans-

gressor. In the nature of things, there can be no middle ground between a free pardon, and an endurance of the penalty of sin. Pardon or atonement! If atonement be made by the transgressor, he is not pardoned; he claims release as a matter of right. Pardon has being and place, only where the culprit deserves the threatened penalty, and cannot offer an atonement. If he suffers the penalty, he is not pardoned.

If pardon were extended without atonement in any form, and especially if it were done on a system, and as a matter of course, then it might afford encouragement or offer a premium to sin. But is this the case under the gospel? The sinner makes none we admit, but is none made?

Does the free and immediate pardon offered to the chief of sinners have no reference to an atonement, made by him or for him? All know that the very foundation of the gospel is the atoning work of Christ, and that upon this; and this alone, the pardon and remission of sin is extended to the guilty. The pardon

of which the sinner is invited to partake, is for Christ's sake, not his; free to him, not because God is indifferent to sin, or disposed in the least to let it pass unpunished, but because Christ has purchased redemption by his own life's blood.

Instead of yielding encouragement to sin, it is the deepest condemnation of it, and affords the strongest and only available motives to abandon its love and practice.

Christ suffered to the extreme demand of the law, that satisfaction might be entered up for the sinner. It is so entered for every sinner accepting of Christ. His suffering is substituted for the sinner's; and while the sinner is, and can be freely pardoned, it is only because he receives and relies upon Christ as his surety. No sin is pardoned except through Christ, no sinner accepted but "in the Beloved." Christ grants his purchased pardon without cost to every soul, however unworthy, accepting of his invitation.

Who could feel encouraged to sin because freely pardoned, when he sees and feels that

that free pardon is the purchase of one who loved him to the death, and suffered in his stead ?

What more surely awakens hatred to sin, and enkindles a burning zeal against it, than an apprehension of pardon secured only by the life's blood of the dearest and noblest friend in the universe ?

“ But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Saviour I have viewed,
And now I hate my sin.”

“ Oh ! how I hate those lusts of mine,
That crucified my God :
Those sins that pierced and nailed his flesh
Fast to the fatal wood.
Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die,
My heart has so decreed ;
Nor will I spare the guilty things,
That made my Saviour bleed.”

It is an old slander against the gospel that if men are justified freely, that if they are taken up from the very defilement of sin, and accepted without goodness of their own, they are thereby encouraged in sin, that they need

make no effort to acquire personal purity. A legal spirit, a self-seeking and self-righteous spirit suggests, sustains, and spreads this slander.

Those however who believe and act upon it, reject the gospel; and while they send the sinner to good works, to religious duties, to doing better, as a preparation to accept of Christ, or as means to be acceptable to him, they send him from peace, and subject him to the cruel bondage of an accusing conscience, or expose him to the hopeless delusion of a heartless formality. He asks for bread and they give him a stone—nay, a serpent.

A gracious, undeserved pardon cannot but meet the sinner in all his guilt and defilement; a relief from punishment by reason of personal merit is not pardon. Nor can a pardon which is extended on the ground of personal merit, if such be called pardon, tend in the least to restrain or repress sin—to produce real sorrow for sin and hatred of it. The feeling in such case is, “I can easily work out merit enough to secure a pardon!” And

when pardoned in this sense, the inward thought will be, "I know I have committed great sins, but what of that? I can make amends by good works, and good wishes, and thus obtain pardon."

This is the system therefore which offers a premium for sin, and not the gracious and only real pardon of the gospel. The idea that God would offer pardon on a basis which would encourage sin is not only preposterous, but blasphemous. To put away sin, he gave his own Son as an expiatory sacrifice; and upon the basis of this sacrifice, he proposes freely to pardon sinners as the only means of delivering them from the love and power of sin; and yet there are found some who, both in theory and practice, evade the truth, perplex the mind, and harass the awakened conscience with the idea that to expect, even when God expressly offers it, a free and immediate pardon of all sin is to act upon a principle which will encourage sin! Encourage sin by the very method which infinite wisdom and goodness devised to suppress and destroy it!

Was there ever such blindness of mind, or such hatred of the truth?

Listen not to such a suggestion. It comes from the pit: and will lead you there, if you follow it.

You never can be safer than when resting upon the word of the Lord: "I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sin." Isa. xliii. 25.

You are never safe without this word. Accept his invitation at once. With this warrant you will stand scatheless at the judgment-seat, without it you must perish.

Equally futile is the objection, that such a method of pardon will expose the gospel to reproach before the world.

The reputation of the gospel is something very carefully to be guarded and it is pleasant to find any one really anxious about it.

But yet none can be more alive to it than God himself, and we may rest assured that no judgment or care of ours can either supersede his, or supply any supposed deficiencies, any

thing not precisely suited to the company or the times. Let us remember too that our judgment and God's may be so widely different, that that which we might suppose to be a reproach, may be in reality an honour and glory. The cross has never been esteemed an honour by the world; and yet the highest honour men can attain for time or eternity comes only through the cross. "No cross, no crown." The same principle may prevail here. What is there in this method of saving men that can authorize reproach?

Is it that salvation from beginning to end is a free gift of God to men? To whom can it be a reproach? To God? Is it an unworthy thing for him to give, to give without money, without price? Is it not his glory? Suppose he granted the blessings secured in the gospel only to the highest bidder. What would then become of the poor, the naked, the starving, the helpless? Suppose he pardoned only those who pay largely for it. What would then become of the destitute and ruined? Who but the rich, the influential, could then

be saved? Would not *this* be a reproach? But now when he makes no difference, when the richest and highest on earth can be saved only on the same basis with the poorest and most degraded; when salvation is a free gift alike to all in Christ; is it in any sense a reproach? When each is alike undeserving, and when neither can in reality pay even one farthing; is it a reproach to God that he bestows freely all the blessings which infinite love can devise?

But is it a reproach to men—to sinners? On what ground? To be objects of undeserved favour, recipients of infinite bounty? It may be a reproach to them that they are sinners—sinners without cause, and against all reason and right. It may justly be a reproach that they are vile and ungrateful; but can it be that they are freely forgiven, saved from hell, adopted into God's family, made heirs of heaven, holy and happy for ever; can this be a reproach even to the poor sinner? From the depths of vileness and guilt to be raised to purity and honour; from misery to

happiness unalloyed and unending; from the depths of poverty and want to exhaustless affluence, to boundless fulness; from being a homeless wanderer, an outcast, a companion of the wretched, degraded, lost, to be sought out by Him from whom he departed, against whom he sinned, whose name he blasphemed, whose honour he despised, whose cause he betrayed; brought back, restored to home, to the favour of God, to the society of the blest, and eternal life and peace in heaven; is this a reproach or an honour? And yet this is that which God gives you a warrant to expect in the promise of a free acceptance for Christ's sake.

The world is a lazar house of sin, corruption, and death; the church is the hospital where the only cure can be effected; the grace of God the only medicated balm; the Lord Jesus the only Physician; every prescription, and all attention by the great Physician, are free. "To the poor the gospel is preached."

Both these objections come with an ill grace from those who make them; and the best ar-

gument after all, against them, is found in the actual developments in the lives of men.

Who feel less at liberty to sin? Who feel the necessity, and strive most for the attainment of universal purity and holiness—the pardoned or the careless sinner? The sinner who thinks he is not wholly depraved, has some good in him, and can repent at pleasure, or the poor, broken-hearted penitent who casts himself wholly upon the mercy of God in Christ, who gratefully and joyfully accepts God's offer of an immediate and gracious pardon on the ground only of a Saviour's merits?

Look at the history of men before and after conversion. Look at the aim, the earnest, honest labour of the church, and the world. With whom do you find most fear and hatred of sin? And whose moral virtues have reflected most honour upon the race? Whose benevolence, philanthropy, patient endurance, and unyielding energies, have done most to elevate man, to glorify God, to dry the mourner's tears, to illumine the gloom of sorrow's

night, and convert the wilderness into a fruitful field?

The friends of this great doctrine are willing that the severest scrutiny may be exercised; confident that salvation by grace, sovereign and free, must for ever claim the adoring admiration of angels, and demand from men everlasting songs of joy and praise.

“ Grace ! 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear,
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.”

It is characteristic of sinners to glory in their shame; but that which constitutes their highest praise, and promotes their purest and most permanent happiness, they regard with distrust and often wholly reject. Thus it is here. Invited to partake of a gratuitous pardon, and assured of the unchanging sympathy, compassion, and love of God in Christ, they nevertheless decline to accept, or delay, on the assumed but futile plea, that it may encourage sin, or become the object of reproach to the world.

It is God's plan, and while it brings glory to him, it confers the highest honour and greatest safety on man. Accept it then without further hesitation, and esteem it your highest privilege to sit at the feet of Jesus, and own yourself "a captive in the chains of love."

3. But I am not sure that I am one of the elect, and therefore I am not invited, and would be repulsed should I attempt to enrol myself among God's people, or expect to be accepted of him.

This is a frequent objection, and one oftentimes greatly perplexing; but without the shadow of a reason.

You have far more evidence that you are elected than that you are not. How does God usually deal with those who are his elect? Does he give them the gospel and afford them some, at least, of the ordinary means of grace? Does he send such providences as tend to make these means impressive and effectual? Does he add to all these an awakened, troubled conscience, through the presence of the Divine Spirit applying the word and convincing of

“sin, of righteousness, and judgment to come?” Does he thus so move upon their hearts as to make sin odious and fearful to them, to impress them with their desert of hell, and arouse them to duties and efforts to escape this fearful doom, and secure a place in heaven? Does he give them to see the vanity of earth, and awaken within them earnest desires and longings for heavenly things? Does he in short, by ways of his own choosing, bring them to feel that they must have an interest in Christ or perish? Does he arrange it so, that Christ in all his fulness as Prophet, Priest, and King, is offered to them freely, and pressed upon their acceptance?

If each and all these questions can be but answered in the affirmative; and if any one so dealt with, may be regarded as hopefully among the number of God's chosen ones, wanting only the actual acceptance of Christ to confirm the truth of his election; then what is the difference between one in such circumstances and your own case? If he may feel encouraged, why may not you? If he may

rest upon God's warrant so freely and fully extended, why may not you? And if he would be without excuse for delay even, in what condition are you? Has not God dealt with you in a manner precisely similar? And do you not now feel that unless you fly to Christ, hell must be your doom?

Yes; but how can I, "unless I am sure that I am one of the elect?" How can you be sure, that you are within a house, except by going into it? How can you be sure of being an actual guest of a friend, except by accepting and complying with the invitation? How can you be sure that you have the title deeds to an estate, except by taking them into actual possession? How can you be sure that your friend loves you, except by believing him when he says so, and accepting the tokens and proofs he offers to you?

Such an objection is irrational, it expects a result without a cause, a consequence without an antecedence. The only way that you can be sure of your election is by doing what

the elect do. Read carefully Philippians ii. 12, 13. 2 Pet. i. 10, 11. 1 John iii. 18, 19.

“Well, but are not ‘many called, and but few chosen?’ ” Yes; but what has that to do with you? If you accept of Christ, if you believe as the few, does not that prove you to be one of the chosen? If you deliberately delay and refuse to believe in God’s sincerity, in the gracious offer of life in Christ he makes to you, you not only have no present evidence that you are chosen, but you never can have; and what is worse, continuing to reject Christ, you will die in your sins and be lost.

“But are not many wrought upon so as to feel great distress, and fulfil many duties, such as prayer, reading and hearing the word of God, and abandonment of many sins, and after all never are saved, obtain no evidence that they are of the elect?” We admit it; but what then? Do you mean to suggest that they accepted Christ, believed God’s word, and yet were rejected? If so, we deny the whole case, and ask you for the proof. But if you mean only, that notwithstanding their convic-

tions, their troubles, and labours, they never accepted the Lord's gracious offer; then we say they acted as you are now doing, and the result in their case is painfully indicative of what it will be in yours, if you for any cause refuse to take God at his word, and rest upon the absolute sufficiency of his warrant. The certain knowledge of your election is not only not necessary to your believing, but cannot, under present circumstances, be obtained, as already suggested, except by the faith of the gospel. Nor is the certain knowledge of your election, in your sense of it, even essential to your salvation; hence to delay or refuse to accept God's gracious offer of absolute pardon in Christ, is irrational as we have seen, offensive to God, a rejecting of Christ, a grieving of the Holy Spirit, and places your own salvation in most fearful jeopardy.

If God arouses your conscience and gives you to feel your need of Christ, it is his command to you to fly to him, accept of him and rest upon him. This is your duty and your privilege. With God's secret purpose of

election or reprobation, you have nothing in the world to do.

His decree or purpose of grace never prevented a single soul from coming to Christ, never repulsed one who was coming or wished to come; but has saved, and will save millions—"a great multitude which no man can number"—from rejecting him. But for this purpose not a soul would ever have been saved.

"Grace first contrived the way
To save rebellious man ;
And all the steps *that* grace display,
Which drew the wondrous plan.

Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days ;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

It will be time enough for you to investigate this great doctrine, when you have given yourself to Christ on the simple, yet all-sufficient warrant of God's sacred word. Grace calls you, is ready to aid you, and waits to receive you. Act, my friend, act quickly.

“The Spirit and the bride say, Come,
Rejoicing saints, re-echo, Come,
Who faints, who thirsts, who will, may come :
Thy Saviour bids thee come.”

Let your reply be,

“Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve ;
Because thy promise I believe :
O Lamb of God, I come !”

4. “But I am afraid I shall not be able to hold out, to fulfil the duties required of me. I see so many who profess to be Christians, who yet act as I would not, even now, that I fear I should be no better, and am not willing to be a reproach to religion. Besides I think I can do quite as much good out of the church as in it.”

Against this objection we might say much ; we shall not, however, attempt an answer at much length.

It is manifestly founded in a total misapprehension of the gospel covenant. The salvation offered to the faith of sinners is a finished one ; and therefore includes in its arrange-

ments, provision for every possible want of the believer. Christ is a perfect Saviour; "in him it pleased the Father all fulness should dwell, and he is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30. "Christ is all in all." Col. iii. 11.

He undertakes for the sinner in everything, and engages to bring him off conqueror and more than conqueror over every possible enemy. "Because Christ lives, the believer also lives." "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 25.

It is on this account that the very weakest believer is sure to triumph; and the strongest has nothing which he receives not from Christ. The weak, therefore, need not fear, nor can the strong glory in anything of their own.

On this account too, every class of sinners, at every period of life, are invited to Christ, and assured of a complete salvation. The most wretched and degraded, the veriest slave

to appetite, lust, and passion, may expect a perfect victory as certainly as the outwardly pure and morally elevated in character. All are sinners: Christ is the only, yet he is a glorious and mighty Saviour. All need him, and all are equally safe in his hands. Hence the guilt and folly of rejecting such a Saviour are beyond comprehension.

The objection we are considering is also of a character by no means free from guilt; for while it mistakes the entire nature of the gospel covenant, it delays and refuses to accept of Christ as the only yet all-sufficient Saviour.

The invitation which God extends to the sinner, includes the offer of Christ and all the blessings purchased by his atoning blood. And as the duties of Christian life all arise out of the gospel, they are provided for in the fulness of Christ.

To refuse the call of God in the gospel on the ground that you fear you will not be able to maintain your christian character, is to suppose that you are expected or required to serve God in your own strength; or that the Lord Jesus,

the great Surety of the covenant, has not power to perfect his own work. Either supposition is false, derogatory to God, dishonouring to Christ, and ruinous to your own soul.

Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. iv. 13. So you too may say, and find in Christ infinite sufficiency for every exigence or conflict through which as a believer you may be called to pass. Your own strength or wisdom would of course be weakness and folly ; but when Christ volunteers to undertake for you, to be your guide, the Captain of your salvation, why, or what should you fear ? To fear, under such circumstances, is not only unmanly but sinful. It is to doubt the wisdom, power, goodness, truth, and faithfulness of God ! And while you are committing all this sin against God, you think you are acting prudently—even respectfully to the gospel !

Rejecting Christ, prudent !—respectful to his gospel ! My friend, can you not see the real character of your objection, that it is a mere excuse ; and yet as such, involves not

only self-deception, but enormous guilt? You reject Christ, and yet smile complacently upon him, as though you should say to him, "I think very well of you, but am afraid to trust you to secure for me the salvation of my soul? You may do for others, but I am afraid and cannot commit myself to your care!" You decline to accept the invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and yet profess great respect for his service! Where can such a course end? It can terminate only in eternal death. Are you prepared for this? Then turn to Him who offers you a gratuitous pardon in Christ, and who gives you perfect warranty that "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed." Gen. xix. 18. What then you do, do quickly. Purge yourself from the enormous guilt which attaches to your conduct. "Be not afraid, only believe." Mark v. 36. Accept now the offered mercy, and "rejoice

in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh."

Look not to the failures of others: with these you have nought to do, unless to weep over them. The conduct of men, either in virtue or folly, is not the standard by which you are to be judged, nor yet, by which you are to acquire either knowledge or motive for your own personal duty.

If *all* should fail, it would not exonerate you. Others act, and are responsible for themselves, not for you, in your personal relations to God. It is your duty not only to comply with the gospel offer, but to maintain a walk and conversation becoming the gospel. That you are not, or may not be able in your own strength so to do, is no release from the obligation; for the grace which offers a gratuitous pardon secures all needed strength for your future walk, and final triumph. As we have seen, it is the special office and purpose of Christ, to carry you safely through. If others fail, you need not. They, not you, must answer for it; and no failure of men or

angels can justify you in neglecting your personal duty to your God and Saviour. Your own duty is plain, delay not to fulfil it.

Deceive not yourself, moreover, with the idea, that you can be even more useful out of the church than in it. You can't be useful as a Christian, any where, until you become one; and to be one, you must accept, upon God's warrant, the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus. This is the first step. Every thing is disobedience until you yield to the call of God. If you delay to do this under the plea that you can be more useful without it, or without professing it, you arrogate a right to change God's plans, and a wisdom superior to his, as to the way in which you can do most for him! Until you yourself have accepted an offered pardon, and found the preciousness of a Saviour, how can you recommend either to others? What can you do, that will honour Christ more and commend him more to men, than humbly to accept him, and serve him with sincere, earnest, uncompromising devotion?

Your wisdom is of the earth, earthy. To satisfy an uneasy conscience you make this concession to religion (a wonderful one indeed!) that it is all right to be a Christian; but though Christ says, "Come out from the world, and be ye separate;" "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;" yet in my case, it is not necessary; I can do quite as much good, if not more, by remaining among the enemies of Christ, neglecting his commands, and refusing to acknowledge him in his own appropriate way!!

Does not such a statement carry its own refutation, and expose its own folly? But is it not an exact counterpart to your own conduct, to the principle on which you object to an immediate acceptance of a finished salvation offered to you without money and without price? Are your moral sensibilities so blunted that you cannot perceive this? Others can, if you cannot, and it behoves you at once to abandon so fond but feeble a delusion.

Even if, in a special case, your influence as

an unconverted, non-professing man could be exerted to restrain some vice, or promote some moral virtue, more than one known to be a Christian, or than you could, if you were known to be such; this would not affect the principle on which we are urging you to act, in the least. Do you not see that it is not as a Christian that your influence is exerted or felt; or if it be, it is not known or acknowledged? and hence you are acting covertly, deceitfully, and how far from hypocritically, you may possibly be able to judge. And then if your argument be good, it is too good; if good for you, why not for another? And then, why not for all? What then would become of the Christian name and profession? what of the church as a visible body? Utterly unknown; worse still, reduced to hypocrisy on principle. I am a Christian, but I must let no one know it; for my influence will be lessened, and what I do for Christ must be done under false colours. Instead of wearing the livery of heaven in which to serve the devil, I must wear his livery in order best to

serve Christ! Out upon such logic, upon such delusion: it bears the broad seal of the pit. It would reduce the church to the miserable character, which many now attribute to her—that of an unmitigated hypocrisy.

More than all, it is an open, palpable rejection of God's plan; and involves a refusal to obey his command, to repent and believe the gospel: it is nothing more, nothing less, than a rejection of Christ, the very thing we are urging you not to do. "He that is not with me, is against me. He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Matt. xii. 30. You are urging an objection, not against accepting a free salvation, so much, as against any salvation by Christ at all. You change the whole question we are discussing with you; it is not "may I believe?" but "need I?" "can I not do better without believing?"

Be assured that if God deem it necessary or desirable to offer you the privilege, there is seen, on his part, to exist a strong necessity on yours to accept of it. He makes no idle offer, and presents no privilege, which does

not meet some defect in you, and by the acceptance and improvement of which you would not be happier and better.

The fact then that he makes to you the standing offer of a gratuitous pardon and acceptance in Christ, is clear evidence that you need it, and may this moment embrace it.

“Do you mean to say, that without any amendment, or preparation on my part I may now believe in Jesus Christ, and rest with cheerful hope and confident expectation upon him for every blessing of salvation?”

Precisely. “And may every sinner hearing the gospel offer accept it in like manner?” Without a doubt, why not? What amendment or preparation, did Peter make? John i. 41, 42. Or Matthew? ix. 9. Or Saul of Tarsus, when he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Acts ix. 6. Or the Jailer at Philippi? Acts xvi. 30—34.

What amendment could the dying thief make?

The offer is made to you now, in your present condition; not as you can make yourself

by amendment and preparation ; you may die, before the work be done, and what then will become of your soul ? The offer as *now* made would not *then* meet your condition.

Besides, what preparation do you as a guilty sinner need but to accept the pardon offered—to believe the truth and faithfulness of God ? And what amendment do you need, or can you make, other or better than that which Christ proposes and designs to effect for you ?

Only on the principle that God's offer in the gospel is the sinner's immediate, highest, and best warrant to accept it, can we urge all living men every where and in every condition to secure by faith an interest in the finished salvation of Christ Jesus.

Blessed be God, this is all we need. With this, we may go to the palace, or descend into the haunts of vice, the very pathways of death, and call upon men to repent and believe, assuring them of immediate acceptance, peace, and joy with God. To all we may say in God's glorious and gracious name :

“We’re travelling home to heaven above,

Will you go ?

To sing the Saviour’s dying love,

Will you go ?

Millions have reached that blest abode,

Anointed kings and priests to God,

And millions more are on the road,

Will you go ?

Ye weary, heavy laden come,

Will you go ?

In the blest house there still is room,

Will you go ?

The Lord is waiting to receive ;

If thou wilt on him now believe,

Thy troubled conscience, he’ll relieve,

Come, believe.”

Nothing can give greater security than the word of God ; and no warrant can authorize your immediate acceptance of salvation from sin by faith in Christ more directly or positively than the offer he makes to you at this moment.

“Believe and be saved.” This is all. All needed on earth, all desired in heaven. Consider, it is a finished salvation ; everything from the first conviction to the crown of glory

is provided for, and secured by the Lord Jesus. He says, "Come, for all things are ready." Will you *now* believe? Will you *now* accept?

CONCLUSION.

"You meet me so often with the declaration and proofs of a free gospel, that I am shut up to the faith; but still my mind is harassed with this one remaining perplexity. If to me who am so great a sinner, a finished salvation is so freely offered, or rather if the gospel be so free that all who will may partake of it, why should any one be urged to faith? Will not salvation come as a matter of course? If all is provided for in Christ, why demand anything of me?"

Truly, extremes meet. "The corruption of the best is the worst." Out of this glorious doctrine of a salvation by grace, we have the base and degenerate growth of many dangerous and even damnable heresies, plausible at first sight, and claiming a logical descent from this great essential and fundamental doctrine. But though to the ignorant or unre-

flecting these may appear veritable offshoots, —a true natural growth ; they are mere parasites concealing, and, if not removed, preventing, all true developments of the parent stock. Those which now most distinctly intrude upon our attention, are the presumptuous teachings of Universalism with all its licentious tendencies ; and the carnal security and cold indifference of Antinomian arrogance and assumption. Though apparently wide apart, and one more sanctimonious than the other, these are kindred heresies, and die alike by the simple application of gospel truth. Of the one or other of these you seem to be now specially in danger.

But in answer to your question, let me say, you mistake again the nature of the gospel covenant and the gospel offer. This covenant was never intended to secure its own application independent of any approval, choice, or acceptance on the sinner's part, nor is the actual gospel offer intended so to operate. This would destroy moral agency, and render salvation a mere *opus operatum*, the result of

power wholly from without. We can suppose that bare omnipotence could thus save a soul, but it would be a mere physical act, independent of any choice or pleasure; or, peradventure, against all choice or pleasure on the part of the soul saved. On this principle it might be a free gospel, but it would supersede all moral feeling on the part of the sinner. Willing or unwilling, he would be saved.

But is this the gospel of Jesus Christ? Very far from it. This offers indeed salvation freely, a full, a finished salvation; but the offer must be accepted, the salvation must be chosen to become effectual. Not that its power lies in the will or choice of the sinner, but this choice is the occasion of its development. It places the soul in connection with the power. How this choice is itself effectuated, we need not now discuss. We speak simply of the fact that a choice must be put forth.

Food may be offered to the hungry, or clothing to the naked; but one must be accepted and eaten, and the other put on, before any possible benefit can be obtained. The

man suffering from thirst will continue to suffer, if, though pure refreshing water be offered to him freely, he yet persistently refuses to accept the offered beverage. It is but the universal law, that, no matter how free any gift or privilege may be, it must be received; it must be appropriated before its benefits can be enjoyed. Water may be all around a thirsty one—may rise to his very chin, yet if he never drink it will avail him not; he may perish in the very presence of that which would, if appropriated, revive and sustain his life.

This act of appropriation, in reference to the blessings involved and contemplated in the gospel offer, is developed by faith. Faith confides in the promise of a pardon and acceptance with God; and he who so confides, receives and enjoys peace with God, and a happiness at once of the purest and most purifying character. Faith is the deliberate, joyful acceptance of God's method of reconciliation, and becomes the bond of union between Christ and the soul.

Being one with Christ, it seeks and strives to be like him. And thus each believing soul lives, walks, and triumphs by faith. Faith seizes upon every promise, and extracts from it life-giving elements. It is the principle by which the soul apprehends the elements of life in Christ, feeds upon him, and assimilates itself to him. Without this, therefore, the entire work of Christ is of no value to the sinner, and every promise of a faithful and unchanging God a dead letter.

Universalism can have no place in such a system. Though the offer of pardon in Christ be sufficiently comprehensive to embrace every believer; it embraces, and in the nature of things as a free gospel can embrace, none others.

The same principle, precisely, saps the deepest foundation of Antinomian security. Whilst it is true that Christ has purchased a free and full salvation, and nothing is now demanded of the sinner to perfect or strengthen that purchase, yet the work of Christ for the sinner must be accepted by him; he must be identified with the atoning Surety; must be

willing to abandon every hope and foundation of his own and rest upon Christ. This can be done but by faith; and while faith fulfils the office of a receiver, it combines also the function of nutrition and assimilation. Where these last are not developed, no reception has ever taken place. Everything will act out its own nature. If faith be in existence, however feebly, it will to that extent nourish its own peculiar life in the soul, and assimilate it to Christ. It cannot be otherwise.

What foundation then for a system so cold and unfruitful in all the healthful activities of a Christian life?

A candid consideration of these thoughts will, I trust, commend these truths to your entire confidence, and lead you to feel that you are indeed shut up unto the faith.

God offers you now, upon the basis of the Redeemer's work, a gratuitous pardon and the fulness of peace, and hope for this life and the life to come.

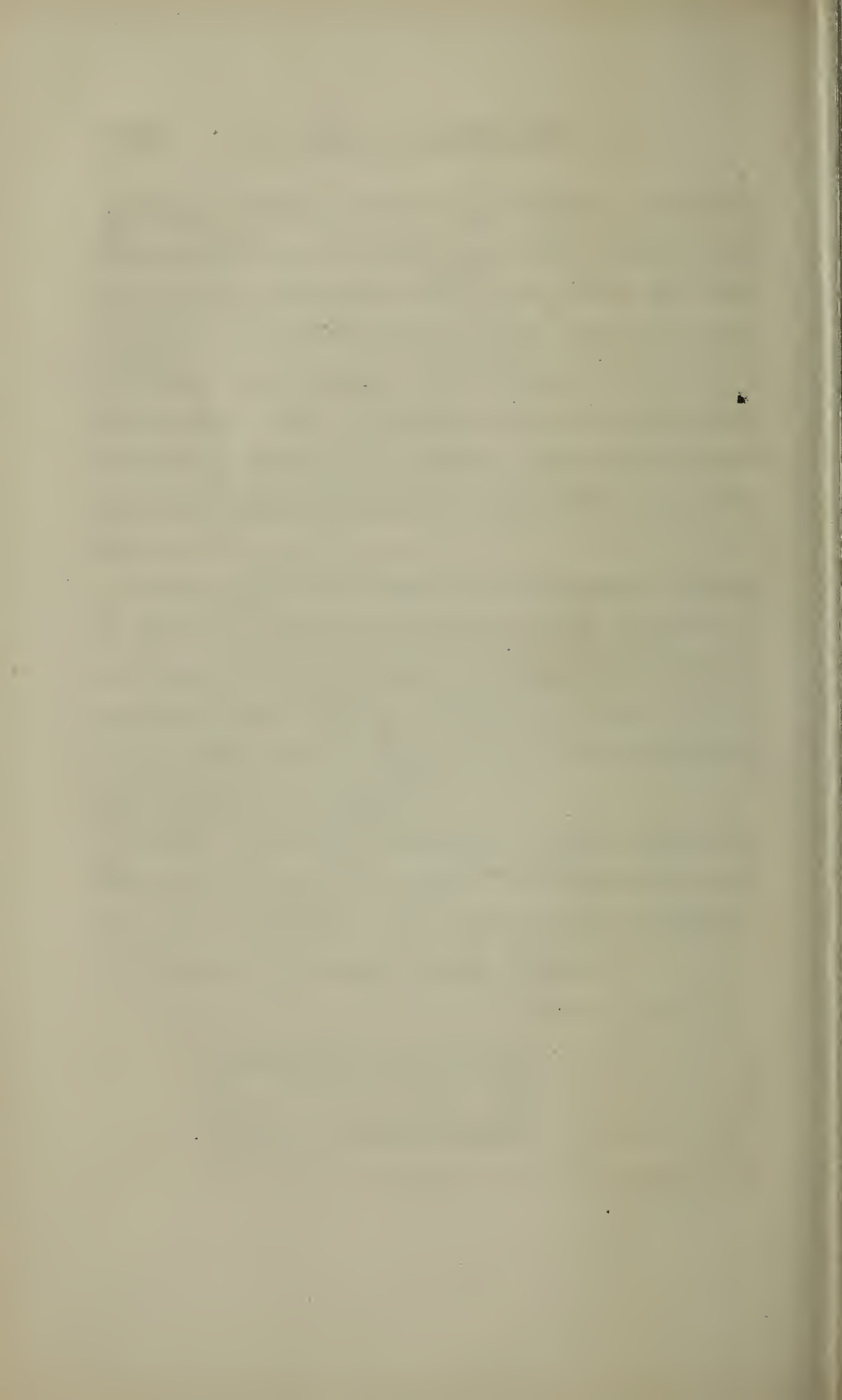
You may now believe, and believing, possess the highest possible security for a perfect and

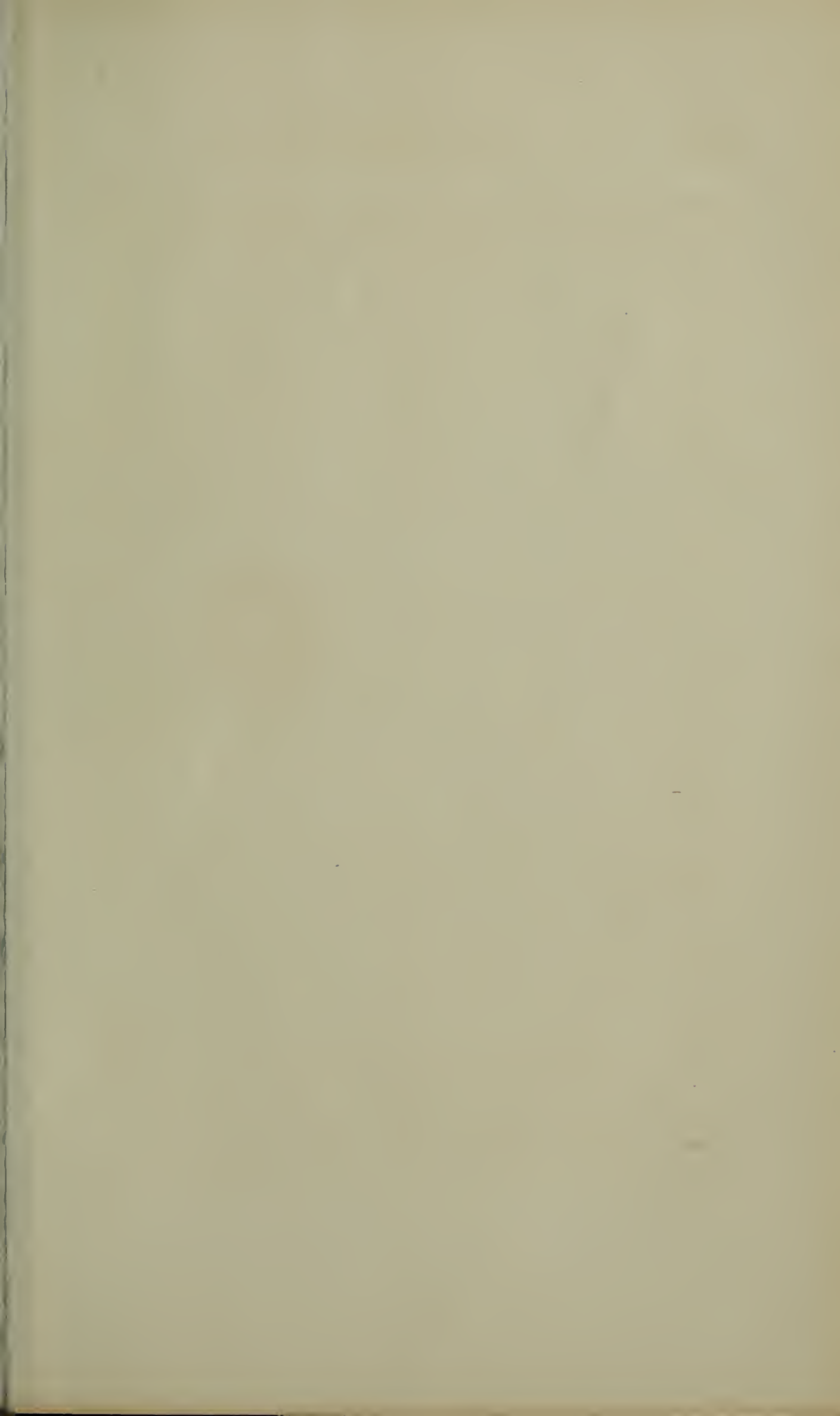
glorious victory over sin, death, and hell. You may *now* become one with Christ, and receive his assurance that you shall be fully fitted for the inheritance of the saints in light. Will you so receive this free, this glorious salvation? No objection can lie against it. While many may be offered, none can endure the test of a rational and scriptural examination.

You have but the one alternative placed before you; believe and be saved, neglect or refuse to believe, and you perish without the possibility of hope. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope."

With grateful, penitent, joyful, believing emotions, fall at the feet of Jesus and cry, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."
"O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

23 Jan. 1860.







Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Nov. 2005

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